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**The Dissertation Committee for Victoria Ann Waters certifies that this is the  
approved version of the following dissertation:**

**Satisfaction of Student Services at Tomball College**

**Committee:**

---

John E. Roueche, Jr., Supervisor

---

Norvell W. Northcutt

---

Thomas J. Darwin

---

Michael P. Thomas, Jr.

---

Larry Rideaux, Jr.

**Satisfaction of Student Services at Tomball College**

**by**

**Victoria Ann Waters, B.S., M.Ed.**

**Dissertation**

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## **Dedication**

To all those who have an opportunity to “break the cycle...”

## **Acknowledgements**

This dissertation is dedicated to my family and friends near and far, who have supported me in so many ways on this journey. To Chris, who held our household together while I was at school and work. Thanks for being my best friend and confidant. To my parents, who understood when I had no spare time. Thanks for encouraging me in all my personal and educational endeavors, allowing me to follow my dreams. You taught me the importance of education. To my brother and his family, thanks for being there when I did have time. To my second family, thanks for your friendship and faith that continually support us. To my grandparents, who inspired me to pursue my dreams.

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followed up on my progress and assisted me in any way possible. Of course, thank you to my colleagues who were always there for me.

# **Satisfaction of Student Services at Tomball College**

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Victoria Ann Waters, Ph.D.

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Supervisor: John E. Roueche

Students are now viewed as customers in many colleges, altering the way in which services are rendered and adding a new dimension to the strategic planning of colleges. Satisfaction is a factor now that students have more choices in higher education. It is time to investigate how student services are delivered and ensure the student's best interest is being served.

A transition in higher education occurred when education became more secular and larger numbers of people pursued postsecondary degrees. Several social and federal initiatives caused a surge in higher education. Students who were previously excluded from higher education were welcomed in community colleges. Student services began to focus on the personal and academic development of "the whole student."

This study identified how satisfied students are with student services at Tomball College. Additionally, employees were surveyed on their perception of student satisfaction. Gaps were identified and recommendations suggested. The adapted SERVQUAL instrument, consisting of 23 questions, was used to solicit electronic

responses from students and employees regarding satisfaction in 10 areas of student services. Three focus groups consisting of students, faculty/staff, and deans/directors were convened to follow-up on electronic survey responses.

The significance of this study is that student services providers will be aware of student satisfaction. Providers often think because they spend so much time and effort planning and organizing that students are satisfied. This study can be used as a tool to improve communication within the college.



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## **CHAPTER I: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY**

This chapter provides an overview of the study, statement of the problem, specific problem area, definition of terms, purpose of the study, research questions, assumptions, limitations and significance of the problem.

Community colleges face increased enrollments at the same time as increased competition for local, state and federal resources. Pressure from legislators, community members, parents, employees, and students drive daily decisions, and measurement is necessary to determine the outcome and effectiveness of those decisions. Oftentimes, academic areas are seen as more important than “supplemental” student services, which are able to be discarded or thrown to the side in tough financial times. Adams (2000, 21) stated, “Higher education’s methods of handling student administrative details are often uncoordinated, ineffective, and a principal source of dissatisfaction among college students” when referring to student services. Identifying student satisfaction or dissatisfaction of student services is the first step in determining the state of student services at each college. Although Wong (2004, 371) speaks of retailers, the same principle can be applied to highlight the importance of student services at the community college, “More importantly, retailers should shift their efforts from a single concentration on merchandise breadth, depth, and quality...for customers who are interested in more than just the product.” Community college products are the courses offered, but students deserve the entire package, quality student services with satisfying experiences.

Due to increased competition from the private education sector, marketing professionals believe students should be viewed as customers. Delmonico (2000) and Aliff (1998) address this growing trend by discussing the importance of Deming’s Total Quality Management principles in many institutions of higher education. McCollough and Gremler (in Delmonico, 2000) introduce a medium-size university that offered a

guarantee in upper-level marketing courses. Overall, students felt the guarantee, accompanied by many conditions, was too ambiguous. In the end, no one asked for a refund. It is important to determine customer satisfaction because, as Athanassopoulos (1997, 264) describes, “Customer satisfaction is increasingly considered to be a basic determinant of business success, one that has considerable effect on firm performance (customer retention, re-purchase and profitability). Customer satisfaction and service quality are integrally related, and although the community college is not concerned about profit, they are concerned about retention. Satisfaction and quality evolve from management. Athanassopoulos (1997, 275) poses this question: “Are the service providers in a position to disentangle their own beliefs from what they understand about their customers’ belief?” Athanassopoulos offers these three possible scenarios for service providers:

1. Matching Pattern. The service provider is not in a position to differentiate between his/her beliefs and his/her understanding about customer beliefs.
2. Overfitting. Concerns the case where service providers consider the service offering as superior to what they believe their customers understand.
3. Underfitting. Concerns the case where service providers consider the service offering as inferior to what they believe their customers understand.

Managers are oftentimes service providers in the community college setting, assisting during busy times (sometimes on a regular basis) and resolving day-to-day issues with students. When managers are connected to the frontline service encounter they understand the importance of the contact employee in customer satisfaction, which, “...in turn, influences customer’s behavioral responses in the form of customer loyalty, word-of-mouth, or switching behaviors (Wong, 2004, 365).”

Wong (2004, 365) repeats what Berry and Parasuraman have said before, “The development and maintenance of strong social relationships over a period of time can give the organization the opportunity to respond to service failures or competitors

entreaties before a customer defects.” The community college is well-known for its ability to respond to community needs in workforce training; they need to be as well known in service delivery. It is hopeful students do not experience a service failure, but when they do, quick resolution is demanded in order to keep the student from quitting or going to another institution. Student services providers who focus on creating relationships with students are likely to win students’ loyalty. Community college students are often first generation college students, and they may also be juggling family, work and school, so it is important for them to not encounter road blocks. Obstacles, even small ones, can cause a student to give up. If student services providers have forged a relationship with a student and he/she experiences a problem, that student is likely to approach the staff member for assistance, potentially deterring them from quitting or developing a negative attitude toward the institution.

Student services providers must be trained in the importance of emotional intelligence so they can recognize positive or negative emotions customers evoke. Wong (2004) reported positive emotional experiences encourage a person to purchase additional items. In the community college this can translate to a student enrolling in leisure or continuing education classes or a student enrolling his/her children in summer programs. Providers need to be able to adapt the service encounter depending on the student’s response.

MCI is a company focused on customer service, with 4,000 customer service professionals. Their secret to quality service (Gerdelman, 1994, 39) is: “listening to customers, understanding their needs, and making the necessary changes to keep them satisfied.” In an effort to address the customer, they created a Customer Care and Quality department. MCI found that their customers valued (Gerdelman, 1994, 37 - 38):

- Courteous, friendly service;
- Reliable, dependable service;

- Trustworthy service, which for MCI customers means keeping our promises, and delivering the value and savings we have said we would;
- One-call resolution, so customers do not have to be transferred unnecessarily or told to call another number;
- “Going the extra mile,” or doing something extra to address a customer concern;
- Showing a personal interest;
- Being innovative.

These priorities are not different from those held by community college students. When student services providers are allowed and encouraged to resolve problems once encountered, students are not passed around to explain their situation to another employee. This sometimes requires “going the extra mile” because it is someone else’s responsibility. When a student realizes an employee showed a personal interest and is satisfied by the service encounter, the experience has potentially “locked in” the student. Even if a service failure were to occur, he/she would be more likely to persist at the college.

## **PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS**

The National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), a professional organization for student affairs administrators in higher education, “is the leading voice for student affairs administration, policy and practice and affirms the commitment of student affairs to educating the whole student and integrating student life and learning” (retrieved from [www.naspa.org](http://www.naspa.org)). NASPA members include professionals working throughout student services areas and include deans and vice presidents, all of whom receive professional development and advocacy from the national organization. Committed to students, NASPA instills the following core values in its members:

- Diversity
- Learning
- Integrity

- Service
- Fellowship
- Spirit of Inquiry
- Collaboration
- Access

NASPA created strategic objectives for each of the five main goals below (retrieved from [www.naspa.org](http://www.naspa.org)):

- A. To provide professional development to our members through the creation and dissemination of high quality experiences, information and exemplary models of practice
- B. To provide leadership in higher education through policy development and advocacy for students on important international, national, state, and local issues
- C. To advance pluralism, diversity, and internationalism in NASPA and the profession
- D. To provide leadership for promoting, assessing, and supporting student learning and successful educational outcomes
- E. To maintain, evaluate, and develop a high quality association structure and national office to meet current needs, anticipate future trends, and promote growth

Student services providers receive opportunities to network with professionals from other institutions, including private entities. They also obtain new ideas using exemplary methods and best practices from conferences in order to support student learning and development. Professional publications keep providers up-to-date with the latest in technology and research. Involvement in professional organizations such as NASPA encourages the growth and development of student services professionals.

#### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

With time and progress comes change. Students are now viewed as customers in many colleges, altering the way in which services are rendered and adding a new dimension to the strategic planning of colleges. Satisfaction is a factor now that students

have more choices in higher education. Delmonico reports results from student surveys indicating "...the entire student experience is most important, not merely instructional issues" (2000, 7). Additionally, private trade schools and online distance learning from private universities offer competitive services promising a competitive time frame toward degree completion compared to the community college. The future of student services may be changing before our eyes. If colleges continue doing things the same way, they will get the same results.

### **SPECIFIC PROBLEM AREA**

Higher education began by preparing religious leaders and the elite class. A transition occurred when education became more secular and larger numbers of people pursued postsecondary degrees. Several social and federal initiatives caused a surge in higher education. The junior college movement began to focus on the first two years of college, providing university professors more time to conduct research and not worry about under-prepared students or workforce-related training. By the time community colleges began expanding across the country, the roles and responsibilities of staff at institutions changed from that of parent to strictly educators. Additionally, the student body became more diverse and individuals came with varied educational experiences, requiring different support services than the elite students of Early America. Students who were previously excluded from higher education were welcomed in community colleges. Student services began to focus on the personal and academic development of "the whole student." Thus, it became necessary to measure the satisfaction of student services in order to know how students perceive what providers are working so hard to do every day.

Tomball College currently assesses student satisfaction through the use of various surveys:

- Departmental Surveys



Departmental surveys are available for students to fill out at any time, although many people only take the time to complete a survey when they experience a service failure, when their needs are not met. Departmental surveys are beneficial because they relate to specific functions of each area and are often shorter than more general surveys. Staff and managers read these surveys regularly and often understand specific events that occurred at the time of the service encounter, whether the area was short of staff due to illness, if a new person was not completely trained, or if an employee made a bad judgment call. Students or community members who complete a departmental survey are likely to make specific comments that can be discussed with the employee, which provides for professional development and improvement in serving students.

- Gulf Coast Association of Institutional Research, Spring 2005

Administered each year, this survey compares Tomball College, specifically, to other colleges in the Gulf Coast region. This is significant because college staff and administrators have an opportunity to see how Tomball College demographics and satisfaction levels rank compared to those of competitors. This information helps the College customize programs for target populations. For instance, according to 2005 results, “Tomball has more single students (75.9 percent) and less married students (12.8 percent) than All Colleges which had 70.8 percent single and 22.9 percent married students” (Gulf Coast Standard Satisfaction Survey Analysis – Tomball College). Tomball has more students working full-time (42.4 percent) compared to all Gulf Coast colleges (40.8 percent) and less part-time students.

When asked about the overall impression of the quality of education at Tomball College, students responded “Good” 48.1 percent of the time and “Excellent” 25.1 percent of the time. When asked specifically about satisfaction, the report states:

The most satisfied at TC was Access to computers and/or computer labs (81.3 percent), Library Services and facilities (80.8 percent), and External condition and appearance of buildings and grounds (77.8 percent). The most satisfied at *All Colleges* were On-line registration, access to computers and/or computer labs, library services and facilities, and On-campus registration.

The benefit of knowing students at All Colleges were more satisfied with On-line registration and On-campus registration, yet these items were not included on the “most satisfied” list for Tomball allows administrators and staff the opportunity to ask “Why not?” If Tomball can make improvements in these areas, perhaps overall student satisfaction will increase.

The Gulf Coast Standard Satisfaction Survey Analysis continues:

The least satisfied at TC was Child care services which was 16.5 percent compared to 50.6 percent at All Colleges, and Services for Veterans which was 16.9 percent compared to 56.8 percent at All Colleges. The other least satisfied were Job placement services, services for students with disabilities, and opportunities for on-campus student employment. *The satisfaction is much lower at TC compared to All Colleges for many student services.*

This information can seem astounding at first glance, but the context is very important to understand. For example, Tomball College does not offer any child care service, so 16.5 percent of students are not dissatisfied with the service; they are dissatisfied by the lack of available service. A lesser known fact is the financial aid office possesses \$20,000 per year in order to fund child care for Pell grant students. Furthermore, when standard items appear on surveys that do not specifically match services offered, students may misconceptualize the item. For example, “Job placement” at Tomball College is intended for graduates of specific programs, like Veterinary Technology and Occupational Therapy. Only students in specific Workforce programs will be aware of this service. Other students may think Tomball should be finding jobs for them, like a temporary service. Even if the categories do not “fit” Tomball’s offerings, administrators and staff can still learn from them. Student services providers learn child care may be a critical issue and plan programs or services with a variety of times

available. Providers can identify more marketing of college services is necessary for students to understand what is available to them.

This study aims to investigate student services, what many items in standardized surveys do not. Certain areas will be covered in-depth, providing contextual information not available in a survey. The intent is to broaden the method of obtaining information in order to provide a more complete picture of Tomball College. Perhaps Tomball can figure out how to make the leap from “Good” to “Excellent.”

- Graduation Survey

Sixty-seven students responded to the graduation survey in Spring 2006. The survey was not administered to students who planned to transfer, but chose not to graduate. The survey requests information on educational experiences (reading comprehension, writing, oral communication, mathematical, and computer skills), student services (advising, financial aid, counseling, job placement, learning assistance center, library services, student activities, and veteran services) and various other items, such as staff attitude, parking, class offerings, and facilities in general. Following is a chart summarizing the question, “How did the following Tomball College services fulfill your individual needs?”

	Exceeded Needs	Met Needs	Did Not Meet Needs	No Opinion	Blank
Advising	10	35	6	14	2
Financial Aid	16	17	5	25	4
Counseling	11	18	8	25	5
Job Placement	4	6	7	43	7
Learning Assistance Center	15	25	1	23	3
Library Services	19	37	1	5	5
Student Activities	12	15	1	33	6
Veteran Services	1	1	0	58	7

The survey allowed students to write in comments on how Tomball College could improve, although only eight students offered comments. The above information can be analyzed in several ways, but specific reasons students' needs were exceeded or failed is more important. Student services providers have an opportunity to create new program offerings or alter current offerings based on the data. Further speculation is invited when considering the "No Opinion" column:

- Advising - 21.5 percent;
- Financial Aid – 39.7 percent;
- Counseling – 40.3 percent;
- Job Placement – 71.7 percent;
- Learning Assistance Center – 36 percent;
- Library Services – 8.1 percent;
- Student Activities – 54.1 percent; and
- Veteran Services – 96.7 percent.

Some of the above areas, like "Job Placement" and "Veteran Services" are limited to certain populations, so it may be acceptable to have a high percentage of "No Opinion" responses. Others, such as "Student Activities" may be explained because if a majority of students work full time, they probably do not have time for activities offered on campus. The survey may have uncovered potential problems in areas that do serve a large number of students. DeShields, Jr., Kara, and Kaynak (2005), who studied

advising, found advisors were non-significant, that is students did not see the relationship between advising and educational outcomes. Knowing this information can serve as an impetus for student services providers to be more intentional by telling students how they are helping them. In other words, providers can assure students see the “Big Picture.” This is important for all students, but for first-generation students and students who may not have been successful at larger institutions, this knowledge could improve student success and confidence.

- Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2005

The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (*CCSSE*) provides a much-needed tool for assessing quality in community college education. *CCSSE* results help colleges focus on good educational practice — defined as practice that promotes high levels of student learning and retention — and identify areas in which community colleges can improve their programs and services for students (retrieved from [www.ccsse.org](http://www.ccsse.org)).

The *CCSSE* philosophy promotes how negative or positive data can lead to continuous improvement.

Regarding student services, *CCSSE* surveys how often students use the services, how satisfied students are with the services and how important the services are to students. The following chart represents student services results:

Frequency – 0=Don't know/N/A, 1=Rarely/Never, 2=Sometimes, 3=Often

Satisfaction – 0=N/A, 1=Not at all, 2=Somewhat, 3=Very

Importance – 1=Not at all, 2=Somewhat, 3=Very

Area	Frequency	Satisfaction	Importance
Advising	1.73	2.13	2.58
Career counseling	1.44	2.01	2.36
Job Placement	1.2	1.78	1.97
Tutoring	1.52	2.22	2.2
Skill Labs	1.78	2.28	2.26
Child Care	1.14	1.68	1.86
Financial Aid	1.74	2.07	2.37
Computer Lab	2.16	2.55	2.52
Student Organizations	1.36	1.96	1.91
Transfer assistance	1.59	2.04	2.38
Services to students with disabilities	1.31	2.07	2.14

The CCSSE survey seeks to find out how often students use student services and how satisfied they are with the services when used. The importance of student services is significant: if a service is ranked as “Very Important,” but the use and satisfaction ratings are low, administrators and staff can investigate further. The only drawback to this survey for Tomball College, in particular, is that all five colleges within NHMCCD are reported together. This study investigated the same categories through the use of an electronic survey and three focus groups.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM**

Assessment of student services should encompass static measures as suggested by Upcraft and Schuh (1996) and Schuh and Upcraft (2000), such as persistence, participation rates, spending patterns, membership recruitment and retention, programs, student newspapers, institutional databases, and food services. They caution that fall to fall persistence rates and graduation rates do not necessarily reflect satisfaction. As reported in the New, Continuing and Returning Student's Report (2005), Tomball College's continuing students from Fall 2004 to Fall 2005 decreased by 38 students, or - 1.7 percent. New students and returning students, those who re-enrolled after missing at

least one semester, were not included in this count. As far as participation rates, Tomball recognizes 38 student organizations, with approximately 550 students involved. The more satisfied and involved students are, the more likely they are to remain enrolled. Surveys are best conducted on a yearly basis to follow satisfaction levels and continuously improve. Staff will be encouraged to use surveys and focus groups more often in order to solicit student opinions.

“Assessing students’ satisfaction with their educational experiences is not easy but can be very rewarding (Upcraft and Schuh, 1996, 163).” Negative feedback can be difficult to hear, especially if the staff and administration feel student experiences are more positive. This study is significant to Tomball College in order to assess the level of student satisfaction with student services. It may precipitate change in how services are rendered. It will also be important to determine how closely the staff and administrators perceive student satisfaction to be. There are a few possible outcomes: close agreement and high satisfaction, close agreement and low satisfaction, distal agreement and high satisfaction, distal agreement and low satisfaction.

The significance of the study is student services providers will be aware of student satisfaction and any existing gaps between what students report and staff perceive. Providers often think students are satisfied due to the time and effort involved with planning and organizing services. This study will encourage staff to view Tomball’s services through a different lens. In effect, some staff members have never been introduced to the idea of measuring student satisfaction in this fashion. The Student Development Division of Tomball College is receptive to this information and will likely further report satisfaction ratings from other sources on a regular basis.

The study will also encourage improved communication within and across other divisions. Student services often receive less attention and less funding than academic areas, and this study will provide an excellent reason to inform the entire college community what Student Development discovers. Furthermore, it will serve as an

opportunity to plan with faculty on improving student services. Student Development may discover new ways to incorporate faculty in providing services. Advisory committees and deans are certain to be a desired audience for this study. Other institutions can use the study in order to see how one college investigated satisfaction of student services and determine if they desire to ask the same questions or use the same methodology. Tomball is choosing to survey all areas in Student Development, but other colleges may choose to only survey a few areas. Focus groups can be conducted at different times for various reasons; they do not need to accompany a survey.

### **DEFINITIONS OF TERMS**

*Student development* encompasses student services. The National Council on Student Development (in Simone, 2003, 41) defines student development as:

- Enrollment management: recruitment, admissions, retention, and completion
- Mission: transfer, job placement, and multiculturalism
- Academic support services: records, advising, financial aid, disabilities, and orientation
- Student events and activities: student government, publications, organizations, and athletics
- Discipline and grievances
- Service learning
- Health services and insurance
- Counseling
- Safety and security

Mattox & Creamer's (1998, 18) definition varies: 1) enrollment services - student systems to assist educational planning; 2) student development - promoting learning and personal development; 3) special support services - child care, transportation, services for learning disabled; 4) college mission – resource allocation to deliver services; 5)



partnership development – internal and external relationships to serve the needs of the students and college; 6) outcome assessment – relating student outcomes to student goals.

Tomball College defines the *Division of Student Development* with the following student services *departments*: Registration, Advising, Financial Aid, Counseling, Career Services, Disability Services, Assessment Center, Library, Extended Learning Center and Student Activities.

*Student services providers* – professionals working in the field of student services

*Student affairs* – often used synonymously with student services or student development.

According to Rhoads and Black (1995), no knowledge base of developmental theory existed before the 1960s.

*Junior college* – The beginning of the community college evolution when two-year institutions focused on the first two years of college.

*Community College* – Open access institutions that provide equality of opportunity, lifelong learning, links to secondary schools as well as universities, timely workforce training, and opportunities for civic engagement

*Comprehensive community college* – offers a wide variety of credit and noncredit courses and programs

*Assessment* – any effort to gather, analyze, and interpret evidence that describes institutional, divisional, or agency effectiveness (Upcraft, 2001, 3)

*Developmental Advising* – Advisors take into consideration the home, work, and academic commitments of students when advising on course schedules

*My Education Plan* – NHMCCD's internal plan to assist students in charting a course or program of study to completion

## **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is threefold – 1) to determine how satisfied students are with student services at Tomball College 2) to determine what student services providers

perceive the level of student satisfaction is with student services 3) to determine any gaps between what students and providers report.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

### **Research Question 1:**

How satisfied are students with student services at Tomball College?

### **Research Question 2:**

How satisfied do employees perceive students to be with student services at Tomball College?

### **Research Question 3:**

What gaps, if any, exist between what students and employees report regarding satisfaction?

## **ASSUMPTIONS**

This study assumes the relationship between service quality and satisfaction are integrally related. The researcher expects large gaps between students' opinions and employees' perceptions.

## **LIMITATIONS**

Although the terms "assessment" and "measurement" are used, this study is limited in the amount of statistical calculations that will be performed to analyze the data. Interpretation will be based on departmental means in each of the 10 areas, survey results per question in each of the 10 areas, followed by three focus groups: students, faculty/staff, and deans/directors.

The researcher expected gathering information on 10 departments to be a challenge. The electronic survey was lengthy. In order to ensure responses to all pertinent questions, they were required. Following the survey, the researcher coordinated with faculty and staff to facilitate the process of convening focus groups. This study at

Tomball College is limited to making improvements at Tomball College. Parameters and available resources may vary at other colleges.

## **CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

Young (2003) believed that student services values include individuation, the whole individual, the unique individual, the experiencing individual, and the responsible individual. Students are growing and figuring out who they are in college. They are social and emotional beings who are different, which creates uniqueness. Students are learning they possess agency and are responsible for their own experience; they are not passive recipients of the learning process.

The American Council on Education published *The Student Personnel Point of View* in 1937 emphasizing "...coordination with the academic enterprise with the goal of ensuring the maximum improvement of the student, the meeting of potential" (A.C.E., 1937). The student also plays a part in the "whole student" development, a new idea at the time. In 1949, the statement was revised and began moving toward the idea of student self control and standards of conduct (Carpenter, 1996). There is a new direction toward enrichment, not just services.

NASPA's 1987 statement declared student services enhances and supports each college's mission and goals; student services does not compete with or replace the academic goals of the college. In effect, student services leaders began to deemphasize student choice. Another NASPA statement in 1995 (Kuh, Lyons, Miller & Trow) redefined the relationship between institutions and students as one of great mutual respect and high expectations.

The Student Learning Imperative of 1994 (ACPA, 1994) emphasized learning theory and assumed student services professionals can determine which educationally sound activities are most important to use with students.

Carpenter (1996, 23 – 24) uses Whitt, Carnaghi, Matkin, Scalese-Love, and Nestor to establish that "...emergent paradigm thinking and the complexities of practices

and diversity in higher education made a unified philosophy of student affairs impossible to divine – indeed, unwise and inappropriate,” defining the goal of student services:

“...facilitate the process of collecting information, undergoing experiences, and making meaning by students. Along the way, student affairs professionals may advise, suggest, cajole, and counsel, but they many not live, know, or choose for the students. Nor can any institution.”

Carpenter (1996) suggested each student services professional develop a personal philosophy and make an intentional effort to understand the lens through which he or she views the world.

Webster’s dictionary (Costello, R.B., 1991, 1014) defines “philosophy” as “the critical study of the basic principles and concepts of a particular branch of knowledge.” Young (2003) explained four philosophies are relevant to student services: rationalism, empiricism, pragmatism and postmodernism. Lloyd-Jones and Smith (1954) stated the belief that student affairs was not simply a collection of services, but also a philosophy.

At one time, rationalism included intellect, emotion, and morality, but now it is purely intellect. Rationalists believe in universal truths, which translate into classical literature, Socratic lectures, and teacher-centered classrooms. This environment serves the intellectual elite, whom the faculty desire to attract. Rationalists believe student services are extracurricular; their job is to attract and discipline students, while serving faculty.

Unlike the rationalists, the empiricists are “...bent on discovering new modes of expression that might be on the outer edge...” (Young, 2003, 91). Empiricists assert certain principles based on the logical explanation of observations and facts. They support “pure” research in education, including the use of scientific methods to justify the specialization of student services, which are often thought of as ancillary and fragmented.

Pragmatism was born from empiricism, but differs in that it is forward thinking. Pragmatists assume life experience and social interaction define an individual’s lifelong education. They promote respect for everyone and believe knowledge is dynamic. The

needs of society are important, as “applied” research (versus pure) is emphasized, along with students’ (versus faculty) desires.

Postmodernism also focuses on the human experience, including informal learning activities. Faculty is not superior to student services personnel or even students. Oppression of any kind is not accepted.

With so many philosophies, it can be difficult to define how student services professionals should approach student services.

### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF STUDENT SERVICES**

Brubacher and Rudy (1976, 39) contended “In early America there were always chances for a poor and ambitious youth to go to college and thus elevate himself into the professional classes.” They report colleges such as Harvard and Yale composed their classes of approximately 70% of students without regard to wealth or social position. “Hilltop” colleges, such as Williams and Amherst, were mainly denominational and expanded opportunities throughout the union for poor students to work their way through school.

After education transitioned from the religious and moral development of the clergy to the secular education of the masses, institutions began to focus on enrollment, discipline, housing and human development. This was the first division between the academic and student services sides of the house, as the faculty desired to focus solely on academics - so began the professionalization of student services. Nuss (2003) follows the progression of change in student services by time periods: The Founding and Early Years, Diversification, Emergence of the Profession, and Expansion.

The development of community colleges furthered the expanse of higher education, allowing students (especially first generation) closer and more affordable options than state or private colleges. In fact, people with families now had an opportunity to make a career change or have a second chance at a college education. Community colleges differed from elite schools of the past because they offered open

access – increasing the number of part time and under-prepared students. These students needed increased services in the form of tutoring and advising.

### **The Founding and Early Years: 1636 - 1850**

This time period was guided by Brubacher and Rudy's (1976) idea of "*in loco parentis*," where the institution acted as a substitute parent, making decisions in the best interest of the student. Colonial colleges, whose students were on average, fourteen years of age (Rhoads & Black, 1995), provided paternalistic caring for the student and his or her physical, intellectual, social, and moral development. Extracurricular activities, including Greek sororities and fraternities, began as outlets of classical thought. The literary and debating societies emerged into a more social realm and began turning away from the classical curriculum of the day.

### **Diversification: 1850 – 1900**

Higher education began to change with the passage of the Morrill Act of 1862, which created the land grant colleges, and the Morrill Act of 1890, which established the historical Black colleges. Student populations increased and diversified, serving many students who were previously excluded from higher education. Faculty and presidential roles also changed, beginning the dissolution of "*in loco parentis*." Harvard redefined student services when then president, Eliot, stunned traditionalists of classical education by allowing students self-expression and individual choice in the curriculum. The movement began "...to guide students in their pursuit of knowledge and match students with careers for which they were best suited while they discovered their strengths" (Croy, 2002, 41). Additionally, faculty focused on conducting research instead of being involved in the lives of students. Nuss (2003) pointed out how academic advising grew in importance due to these developments.

In 1870, the Michigan Supreme Court approved the construction and operation of comprehensive high schools using public funds with the Kalamazoo Decision (AACC,

2001). The University of Michigan proposed the first junior college in 1895 (Geller, 2001). This period set the stage for the growth of two-year colleges which were initially housed in the public high schools.

### **Emergence of the Profession: 1900 – 1945**

Junior colleges began in the high schools, using the physical and human resources already in place. Joliet Junior College, founded in 1901, by William Rainey Harper, president of the University of Chicago, initially served college and high school students, but by 1915 served exclusively college students due to increased enrollment (AACC, 2001). In 1907 California followed with the Caminetti Act allowing high schools to offer college courses, but participation was low (Geller, 2001). Croy (2002) stated that many small towns wanted to create and partner with local junior colleges in order to enhance regional economic development.

Student responsibility became the norm by 1915 with “...at least 123 colleges and universities...employing some variant of the honor system” (Nuss, 2003, 68). In 1917 Junior College Accreditation Standards were set regarding admissions policies, faculty qualifications, and minimum funding levels (AACC, 2001).

Student councils and student government began in 1918 with the formation of Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society, legitimizing leadership and academic achievement at the junior college level. With approximately 200 two-year colleges in operation by 1920, U.S. Commissioner of Education, Philander Claxton, and George Zook, higher education specialist, organized the first meeting of the American Association of Junior Colleges (later recognized as the American Association of Community Colleges).

In 1921, California led the nation in developing fiscal and policy legislation to govern and operate local independent community college districts. Mississippi became the first state to organize a governing board to work with local boards in order to balance vocational and transfer programs in 1928. The Asheville Decision of 1930 gave many junior colleges legal standing by “...ruling in favor of the community and its right to



meet the educational needs of its citizens as it saw fit” (AACC, 2001, 107). Perhaps not surprisingly, junior college enrollment increased during the Great Depression due to a lack of jobs (Geller, 2001).

The passage of the GI Bill of Rights in 1944 assisted servicemen returning from World War II by providing them with financial aid to pursue higher education. This landmark movement broke down financial and social barriers to a college education and set the stage for the great expansion of junior colleges.

Student affairs, as it was called, encompassed vocational guidance, health services and counseling services. With the community college movement, transfer programs to four-year universities became necessary. Student services professionals became engaged in teaching human development and providing college orientation, earning the respect of some faculty. Positions such as Counselor, Dean and Director were often divided by race and gender of the students. At this point individual personalities and institutional mission determined the organization of student affairs on campuses. Universities began conferring degrees in this area, thus increasing the opportunity for professional associations to develop. Columbia University even began offering a Master’s degree program in 1914. Accreditation programs and professional standards were designed to “provide quality programs, direction, and strategy for student affairs professionals” (Croy, 2002, 44). Over the years, professional organizations developed into the current National Association of Student Affairs Professionals (NASAP) and the American College Personnel Association (ACPA).

### **Expansion: 1945 – 1985**

Nuss (2003) summarizes major societal changes that occurred during this time period, such as women and minorities’ participation in higher education, increasing the need for greater student services. Additional federal involvement included the 1947 Truman Commission Report, calling for an expansion of comprehensive community

colleges to serve as cultural centers (AACC, 2001). This new emphasis on community introduced an emphasis on civic responsibility for student affairs professionals.

The W. K. Kellogg Foundation began supporting the development of community college leaders in 1960 by establishing 12 university programs. Future deans, vice presidents, and presidents could receive a solid foundation in leadership, policy, finance, and teaching and learning that uniquely concerns the community college. Cohen & Brawer (1996) believed the importance of these programs were yet to be seen as “the sixties saw a doubling of the number of public two-year colleges going from 405 in 1960 to 847 in 1970.”

The Brown v. Board of Education in 1954, the Title VI Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Higher Education Act of 1965, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, not only increased equal access and financial aid to students, they supported a broader world curriculum and more specialized roles for student affairs professionals. As education became more accessible to the average person, it became important for social and economic mobility. The rising number of “baby-boomers” and increased part-time student participation required a new approach to student affairs.

Student activism heightened in the 1960s, challenging the Vietnam War and racial injustice. Nuss (2003) reported that in 1961, *Dixon v. Alabama State Board of Education* guaranteed student’s independence and “due process” became standard operating procedure. What resulted was the integration of students into the governing practices of higher education. Other student rights decisions determined eighteen year-olds are legally adults, changing the relationship between the institution and the student.

The League for Innovation in the Community College was created in 1968 as a commitment to “...improving community colleges through innovation, experimentation, and institutional transformation” (AACC, 2001). Open admissions at City University of New York in 1970 began the era of the comprehensive community college and the need for innovation. Communities with great economic need created innovative colleges to

support their local regions, often enrolling large numbers of students, many at the developmental level. In 1972, the Association of Community College Trustees formed to provide professional development and training opportunities to elected and appointed officials throughout the nation.

In 1978, California's Proposition 13 resulted from public demand of accountability from public institutions on the spending of tax dollars. Affecting more than the state of California, rising property taxes have been forcing people on fixed incomes out of their homes and young, upwardly mobile families are experiencing difficulty in purchasing homes due to the high cost of living.

### **Current Status of the Profession: 1985 – present**

Edmund Gleazer, Jr., president of the AACC in 1974, predicted a leveling off of enrollment in America's community colleges. As evidenced by only a five percent growth in the number of community colleges between 1976 and 1994 (Geller, 2001, 7), the importance of enrollment and retention is high for student services personnel. Additionally, individual college missions have become important in attracting students. Community colleges have even more competition with private entities such as ITT Technical Institute and the University of Phoenix. Many more colleges offer degrees online, forcing community colleges to keep up or lose students. Another dilemma is when students receive enough training to demand high salaries without completing the degree. A 1988 Commission redefined "community" to include "a climate to be created" (AACC, 2001, 109). Student services personnel contribute to continually renewing this climate in the community through outreach and partnerships.

Geller (2001) reported the AACC and ACCT established the Joint Commission on Federal Relations in 1982 in order to represent community colleges in lobbying efforts. One result was the 1991 passage of the Carl Perkins Act, which allowed high school students to articulate courses at the community college. A Reauthorization of

Perkins funding in 1998 allowed community colleges to determine how funds would be spent in vocational and technical education.

The Hope Scholarship and Lifetime Learning tax credits were established in 1998 to encourage participation in postsecondary education while alleviating some of the rising costs of higher education due to decreased state and federal funding. Also established in 1998 was the Workforce Investment Act, providing Individual Training Accounts and one-stop career center systems for those individuals who qualify.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

Critics of student services personnel charge there is no philosophy; their job is to “maintain.” According to Rhoads & Black (1995), three waves of theorizing about student affairs exist: *In Loco Parentis*, Developmental Theory, and A Critical Cultural Perspective. The practice of *in loco parentis* represented the unidirectional relationship between university staff/faculty and students. The college controlled the environment, enforcing disciplinary action as a parent would if students disregarded the rules.

### **Developmental Theory**

Beginning in 1937 when the Student Personnel Point of View was published, student affairs professionals were called on to: “(a) respond to each student as a whole person, (b) attend to individual differences, and (c) work with students at their level of development” (Rhoads & Black, 1995, 414). The entire college was seen as responsible for developing the “whole” student (Barr & Upcraft, 1990; Nuss, 1996; Rentz, 1996). Fluker (1995) explained Rippey’s Student Development Education model of 1986 “requires the use of all change strategies by all professional groups working in concert to meet all developmental needs of students.” No knowledge base of individual development existed before the 1960s, when psychology – related research began to emerge (Rhoads & Black, 1995).

## **Psychosocial Development**

Erik Erikson conducted the early research in the area of psychosocial development, determining various stages of adult experience at which point “...their biology and psychology converge...” (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998, 10). They change who they are, how they see themselves, and how they want others to view them. Erik Erikson first investigated life span development in 1959, resulting in eight stages:

- **Preschool**
  - Trust versus Mistrust
  - Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt
  - Initiative versus Doubt
- **Childhood**
  - Industry versus inferiority
- **Adolescence**
  - Identity versus Role Confusion
  - Intimacy versus Isolation
  - Middle Adulthood
  - Generativity versus Stagnation
- **Late Adulthood**
  - Integrity versus Despair

Evans (2003) and Hamrick, Evans, and Schuh (2002) explained the transition from one stage to the next as a developmental crisis brought on when biological and psychological changes intersect with environmental demands requiring a decision. Successful or unsuccessful resolution of each crisis determines high or low self-esteem, respectively. Although Erikson did not study college students, many theorists used his work as a foundation for focusing on college student development.

Marcia (1966) studied identity development in college men and proposed four styles of identity resolution related to political ideology, vocational choice, and religion:

1. *Identity diffusion*. A crisis may or may not have been experienced, but in either case no commitment has been made; however, the person is not concerned about lack of direction.
2. *Foreclosure*. No crisis has been experienced, but a commitment has been made on the basis of the values of significant others, particularly parents.
3. *Moratorium*. The person is in the midst of a crisis and is actively attempting to make a commitment.
4. *Identity Achievement*. The person has experienced a crisis and has worked through it, making a commitment.

Josselson (1987 & 1996) furthered Marcia's work in examining women in their senior year of college and throughout mid-life, finding that crisis in relationships leads to growth and change more than any other factor.

Social scientists of the 1960s, Nevitt Sanford, Douglas Heath, Kenneth Feldman, and Theodore Newcomb, studied how students changed in college from psychological and sociological perspectives. Sanford introduced cycles of differentiation and integration, when students understand how their personal characteristics make them who they are as an individual. He also developed a relationship between readiness, challenge and support. Evans, Forney, and Guido-DiBrito (1998) summarized this range of optimal dissonance: if a person encounters too much challenge, he or she may become less adaptive and regress or retreat early; whereas, if a person encounters too little challenge, he or she may not develop. Sanford (1966) maintained, "The amount of challenge a person can tolerate is a function of the amount of support available." Community colleges possess more nontraditional and underprepared students than universities. Many are working adults and single parents who require extra support services to avoid dropping out.

Heath (1977) proposed five growth dimensions in the areas of intellect, values, self-concept, and interpersonal relationships to describe one's maturation progression.

He agreed with Sanford that the environment influences or inhibits growth. Considering Heath's work focused on male undergraduates in 1968 when educational access was beginning to increase, it is easy to imagine community college students are even more susceptible to environmental conditions.

Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito (1998, 8) reviewed Feldman's & Newcomb's study on the effects of peer groups on individual college students. In 1969, they reported: "...peer groups help students achieve family independence, facilitate the institution's intellectual goals, offer emotional support, and meet needs not met by faculty...." Peer groups also influence students' decisions to stay in college.

Chickering (1972) also built on the work of Erikson, introducing seven vectors of development in the college years. He updated his research in identity formation with Reisser (1993):

- Developing Competence
- Managing Emotions
- Moving Through Autonomy Toward Interdependence
- Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships
- Establishing Identity
- Developing Purpose
- Developing Integrity

The vectors are not rigid, but they do "...lead to greater complexity, stability, and integration" (Evans, 2003, 182). Evans explained how institutional factors such as mission, size, curriculum, diversity, and support services influence students' movement through the seven vectors. Other researchers have identified gender and cultural differences with these vectors.

The average age of the community college student is 29 (AACC, 2006), so it is important for student affairs professionals to be aware of adult development throughout the life span. Life stage perspectives, as analyzed by Erikson and Levinson, involve

people becoming more individuated and complex as they grow older. Some stages of development are age-linked such as the “age-thirty transition” (Hamrick, Evans & Schuh, 2002, 38) and others are sequential, but not age specific. According to Roberts & Newton (1987), women tend to experience more conflict achieving the more complex goals involving careers and relationships. People begin when they enter the adult world, then they settle down, and finally, they reevaluate life, sometimes experiencing a mid-life crisis. Reevaluation occurs throughout life.

Evans (2003) summarizes life events perspectives proposed by Scholossberg, Sugarman, Whitbourne, and Fiske and Chiriboga, which focus on how individual life events are negotiated over a period of time. Factors such as personality, attitude, support networks, and outside resources affect how people react to individual life events such as marriage, death, war, and economic conditions. Other factors include type, context, and impact – whether or not the event was anticipated, if it was personally experienced, where it took place, and how much it changed the person’s life.

Life course perspectives offered by Elder, Hughes and Graham, Bengston, and Neugarten focused on social roles like parent, friend, or worker, and the timing of life events. Neugarten (1979, 888) pointed out how socially constructed timelines can cause stress when personal experiences are “off-time.” Additionally, personal lives are intertwined, so events in one person’s life will affect others’ lives.

### **Cognitive-Structural Development**

Cognitive structural theorists, who base their work on Piagetian theory, believe people develop cognitively in specific stages and emphasize “...changes in the *way* people think but not *what* they think” (Evans, Forney & Guido-DiBrito, 1998, 11). Their work can be divided into six categories: epistemological reasoning, moral reasoning, faith development, ego development, orders of consciousness, and maturity (Hamrick, Evans & Schuh, 2002, 56).



William Perry posited nine points of view from which people reflect on the world. Hamrick, Evans, & Schuh (2002) introduced the nine points in four levels. Dualism considers an idea or information as right or wrong. Multiplicity is when an individual understands numerous opinions exist, but is unable to evaluate an argument. Relativistic thinking is when individuals realize situations do not have one right answer; they are able to analyze opinions. Commitment occurs when alternatives are considered. Individuals test, evaluate, and modify commitments in learning environments. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule examined women and compared the results to Perry's men. Their findings suggested teaching methods using connection and acceptance, rather than evaluation, be used.

Baxter Magolda's work studied men and women over a five year period, resulting in four "ways of knowing" (Hamrick, Evans & Schuh, 2002, 61):

- 1.) Absolute knowing – knowledge is certain; authorities have all the answers; students responsibility is to reproduce the information
- 2.) Transitional knowing – some knowledge is uncertain; authorities do not always have all the answers; understanding and using information is more important than memorizing
- 3.) Independent knowing – knowledge is mostly uncertain; students desire a positive environment and want to be engaged; students desire evaluation on strength of thinking
- 4.) Contextual knowing – validity of knowledge depends on position and evidence; students desire ability to apply material; students desire critique by classmates and instructors.

Student affairs professionals can use this knowledge to enhance intellectual development. In reviewing Magolda's work, Hamrick, Evans & Schuh (2002, 62) suggested educators "...validate the student as knower, situate learning in the student's experience, and define learning as jointly constructed meaning."

King and Kitchener focused on reflective judgment - that is how individuals solve a problem without a noticeable solution, such as racism or pollution. Their findings were “*Reflective thinking* (stages six and seven) includes awareness that knowledge must be actively constructed, that conclusions must be viewed in context, that judgment must be based on relevant data, and that any conclusion is open to reevaluation” (in Hamrick, Evans & Schuh, 2002, 59). Progression to these stages only occurs when individuals are challenged with complex and “ill-structured problems.”

### **Moral Development**

Evans (2003, 189) defined moral development as “the process by which individuals go about making decisions that affect themselves and others.” Kohlberg developed a six-stage model related to justice and rights. The preconventional level of moral reasoning represents concrete and self-focused thinking. Societal rules and opinions of others become important in decision-making at the conventional level of moral reasoning. At the postconventional, or principled level, individuals use self-determined principles and values to reason. Hamrick, Evans & Schuh (2002) suggested educators introduce contradiction in student’s views in order to enhance intellectual development. Kohlberg’s work has inspired myriad of other studies, most of which support his main findings (Evans, 2003). Carol Gilligan countered Kohlberg’s work by examining women and the relational aspect of care and responsibility over justice. Gilligan studied real-life, rather than hypothetical, moral dilemmas such as abortion. Gilligan’s ideas about care specifically influenced counseling and leadership development.

### **Development of Social Identities**

College students are attempting to figure out who they are, what they want in life, and how to accomplish their goals. Racial, ethnic, sexual, gender, and minority identity development all play an important part in defining the self, and may be pursued through

academic inquiry and student activities. Religious identity and multiple identities also factor into personal development. Social class and background also influence identity. The community college is known as an equalizing factor; they "...embody a unique egalitarian commitment to educating all" (Levinson, 2005, 24).

## **Typology**

Typology theorists highlight individual differences and promote them as beneficial to society; they are nonevaluative. Typology influences how people learn and develop. Personality type theory examines how people perceive or become aware of their environment, how people make judgments and how they relate to that environment. First proposed by Jung, and fully developed by Meyers, people fall into one of sixteen different personality types based on:

- Extraversion or Introversion
- Sensing or Intuition
- Thinking or Feeling
- Judging or Perception

Jung believed all people possess the ability to use each of the above-named attitudes, but one is more naturally dominant than the other. Holland's theory of vocational personalities and environments assumes six types of personality (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998, 228-229):

- Realistic – active nature working with tools, machines, and animals in manual, mechanical, agricultural, and technical areas
- Investigative – investigative nature competent in science and mathematical areas
- Artistic – spontaneous nature and enjoys language, art, music or drama
- Social – social nature working in education, health care, or enlightening fields
- Enterprising – leaders or persuaders working to achieve organizational goals or material outcomes

- Conventional – systematic and orderly nature working in clerical or computational areas

Holland also posited secondary assumptions such as calculus, consistency, differentiation, identity, and congruence assist in explaining people's environmental interaction and behavior. Holland created a hexagonal model (calculus) to demonstrate the closer the six personality types are to each other, the more similar. Consistent environments exert more influence on people, although consistent people are more difficult to influence. Differentiated groups are those who possess similar types. Differentiation at the individual level depends on how characteristic one is to one type (differentiated) or multiple types (undifferentiated). Identity relates to what Holland named "clarity and stability" (in Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998, 231) of a person's goals and interests. Congruence is evident when the individual's personality type matches that of the environment, resulting in harmonious opportunity and reward for doing one's job.

### **A Critical Cultural Perspective**

Rhoads and Black (1995) reported that Cheatham (1991), Kuh, Whitt & Shedd (1987), and Stage and Manning (1992) drew attention to emerging frameworks for student affairs by challenging the status quo. Intentionality is necessary to transform student services so that feminism, critical theory, postmodernism, and multiculturalism are addressed.

Gilligan highlighted male-dominated views in development and proposed an ethic of care and concern be introduced into higher education arguing that when faculty, staff, and students experience a connectedness, democracy and egalitarianism prevail. Critical theorists, such as Bourdieu, Tierney, and Rhoads were also concerned about democracy, arguing when social and cultural groups possess the greatest capital and cultural capital are "...best able to define social reality for themselves and for others," (Rhoads & Black, 1995, 416) resulting in an imbalance of power.

Rhoads and Black (1995, 416) defined multiculturalism as “...communities where diverse groups and worldviews coexist.” Other theorists, such as La Belle & Ward, Hill and Bensimon, all emphasized the need to change the foundational structures of organizations that favor one group over another, thereby perpetuating the marginalization of various groups.

Manning (1994) identified seven principles student affairs practitioners can adopt in order to become transformative educators:

1. Play a crucial role in the way college communities are structured.
2. Empower social and cultural settings.
3. Contribute to the development of campus communities based on an ethic of care and a commitment to democracy.
4. Create conditions in which diverse students, faculty, and staff can participate fully in campus decision making.
5. Respect cultural differences and encourage others to do the same.
6. Treat students as equals in the struggle to create a more just and caring academic community and society.
7. Embrace conflict as an opportunity to transform the academic community.

### **Applying Theory**

Student services professionals must consider all of these theories when designing programs to support academic learning. Staff and processes must consider how students develop in order to work effectively with students to attain their goals. Students must be challenged and supported in “becoming” who they are meant to be. Vincent Tinto provided evidence of how student involvement leads to higher academic performance and greater social integration, which increases the potential for retention and future involvement (Tinto, 1993). Tinto (1982) also argues that students make two commitments – the first is the long term goal of obtaining a degree; the second is in

choosing an institution. Student services providers influence students' experiences, so it is in the best interest of colleges to measure satisfaction.

## **RELATED RESEARCH**

### **Assessment**

"A key factor in assessment's initial rise in popularity was the spate of developmental theories which were developed during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s" (Ruby, 1996, 24). In *Assessment Practice in Student Affairs* (2001, 3) Upcraft defined assessment as "...any effort to gather, analyze, and interpret evidence which describes institutional, divisional, or agency effectiveness," which includes clientele satisfaction. Quantitative or qualitative measures are used to assess effectiveness. Evaluation uses assessment information to improve effectiveness. Upcraft posited assessment in student affairs is necessary for survival. He asserted that the area of student services escaped budget cuts in the past, but the future could be a different story. Assessing student satisfaction is worthy research because colleges can see how important student services are; instructional satisfaction with low student services satisfaction may not be enough to retain students. Upcraft (2001, 10) believed assessment efforts "...show positive relationships between students' out-of-class experiences and use of student services and programs and student learning, including academic achievement and retention." Local results may not confirm national findings because students' relationship to the institution varies from college to college.

Assessment of student services should encompass static measures as suggested by Upcraft and Schuh (1996) and Schuh and Upcraft (2000), such as persistence, participation rates, spending patterns, membership recruitment and retention, programs, student newspapers, institutional databases, and food services. The authors caution using fall to fall persistence rates and graduation rates, which do not necessarily reflect satisfaction. Community college students, specifically, may intend to transfer instead of

graduate. Similarly, participation rates in clubs, organizations, and programs may not reflect satisfaction. Some students participate in order to enhance their employment or future university opportunities. Others participate in order to be involved in key decisions on campus, such as the student government. Spending patterns may not apply at a community college because many services are free. Other services, such as health care, may not be available. Availability of books may be limited to the campus, so students may not have a choice. Student newspapers can reflect the attitudes of students, while student editorials can reflect the level of satisfaction with programs as well as the level of understanding of certain policies. Institutional databases gather student information on student registration and library services, which can be used to determine certain levels of satisfaction and/or usage patterns to help promote programs. Food services pertain to university meal plans and would not possess the same value at a community college.

Active measures, such as those suggested by Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry (1990), should also be considered: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. Upcraft and Schuh (1996, 164) suggested a blending of methods "...since no specific method or technique will result in a complete understanding of student satisfaction...."

Upcraft and Schuh (2000) offer several reasons for assessment not being conducted or completed:

- Lack of commitment from institutional leadership
- Lack of time
- Lack of money
- Lack of expertise
- Fear of results

## **Quality and Satisfaction**

Gronroos (2001, 36) has this to say about service quality, "...one has to have a clear picture of what customers in the marketplace really are looking for and what they are evaluating in the customer relation of service firms." Seymour (1992, 13) proposed several "general philosophical principles" related to quality that can be used in various industries such as the automobile industry, health care, and higher education:

- Quality is meeting or exceeding customer needs.
- Quality is everyone's job.
- Quality is continuous improvement.
- Quality is leadership.

Customers define quality, so organizations should talk to those receiving services in order to determine what they want and need. Everyone should be responsible for delivering quality service. Management needs to understand the daily operations so they understand what is important to customers and no time delay occurs in rendering service solutions. Seymour (1992, 14) insisted "There is always a better way, a simpler approach, a more elegant solution." Quality starts at the top of any organization and should be a vital piece of speeches, vision and mission statements, and goals. Leaders must actively participate in creating a culture of satisfaction.

Seymour (1992, 16) offered four principles of "critical management methods" necessary to implement this philosophy of quality:

- Quality is human resource development.
- Quality is in the system.
- Quality is fear reduction.
- Quality is recognition and reward.

Myran (2003, 101) believed "...funding the development of the faculty and staff is one of the most important investments a community college can make." Education and training empowers people and should not be seen as punishment for not performing well;



it should be considered an investment. If the system creates problems, then people who work *in the system* should assist management in working *on the system* (Seymour, 1992, 17). Colin Powell, in *The Powell Principles*, believed in trusting those in the trenches: “People in the trenches are closer to everything local – conditions, allies, enemies, customers, employees, suppliers, and competitors. They can make decisions and take actions that are faster, more informed, more flexible, and better fitted to local conditions” (Harari, 2005, 82). Improving a system involves admitting there are faults within that system. If an organization runs by fear, then employees will not want to point out faults for fear of discord that could result, or for fear of being blamed for the problems. Instead of fear, rewards and recognition should be awarded for quality service. A simple “thank you,” a certificate for always going the extra mile, or implementing employee ideas can all guarantee quality service will be repeated.

Seymour (1992, 18) completed this picture of quality with “tools of strategic management:”

- Quality is teamwork.
- Quality is measurement.
- Quality is systematic problem-solving.

Cross-functional teams force people to give up power and control, instead surviving on relationship building. When teams are involved in solving problems together, everyone understands how various areas of the organization impact each other. Measurement feedback can then be used constructively to improve processes; it should never be used to blame or to determine merit pay. When teams are functioning well, proactive measures can be taken to problem-solve about delivering quality service. Strategic quality management is a dynamic process that can propel organizations to new heights in quality service.

Alfred and others (1992) deemed that community colleges with a reputation for quality, distinctiveness, and innovation contribute to student success. When quality is

emphasized, faculty, staff, and administrators are directed to do what is necessary to maintain and improve teaching, programs, and services.

Alfred and others, (1992, 12) further explained: community colleges that focus on quality are characterized by 1) distinctiveness of programs and services, 2) diversified and full resources, 3) capacity for innovation, and 4) empowered staff. These practices reflect a focus on delivery: 1) continuous assessment of student needs and expectations, 2) orientation to student and client service, 3) proactive support services, and 4) demonstrated expertise in marketing. Performance practices include 1) mechanisms for feedback, 2) timely strategic decisions, 3) product visibility, and 4) sensitivity to management of cost. Alfred insisted community colleges will garner a competitive advantage when they consider students as clients because student success will increase.

DeShields, Jr., Kara and Kaynak (2005) describe how public and private institutions vary in emphasizing the customer. They recommend, "...that the changing nature of the higher education marketplace encourages college administrators to apply the customer-oriented principles that are used by profit-making institutions" (137). Although their study focused on satisfaction and retention in business schools, it highlighted important factors for other institutions. Specifically, advising staff was found to be non-significant, meaning that students may neither be satisfied nor dissatisfied with advising services as part of the partial college experience. Poor advising staff may lead to dissatisfaction, but the presence of good advising staff may not lead to satisfaction. It is possible that "...students may not see advising staff as being directly related to expected outcomes from a college experience" (138).

"Quality is the defining characteristic of any organization...Organizations strive toward quality by building the institution's vision, mission, goals and values around the customers" (Adams, 2000, 11). Deming (1986) believed quality-minded organizations define "customer" as a relationship in which money and services are exchanged. In order for organizations to be and remain competitive, customers and their needs must be

identified, met, and even exceeded. Organizations must commit to meeting those needs and routinely seek the customer's satisfaction level. Cameron (in Croy, 2002) identified "student educational satisfaction" as one of nine dimensions of organizational effectiveness.

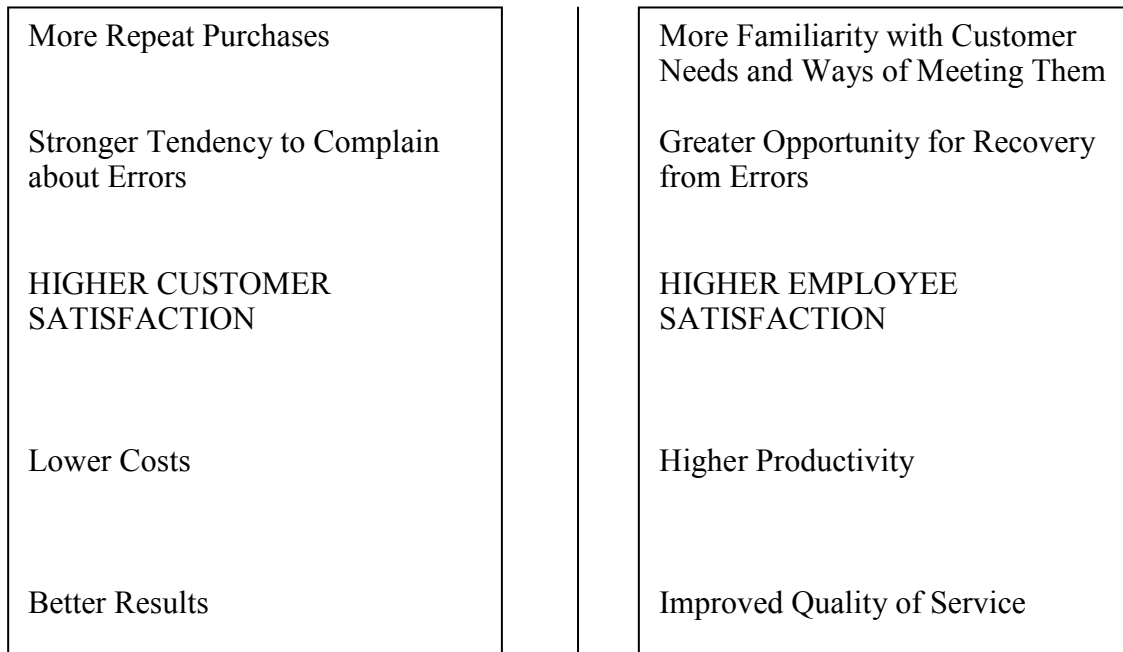
Owlia and Aspinwall (1996) generalize about service quality in higher education based on Garvin's eight dimensions of product quality in the areas of: performance, features, reliability, conformance, durability, serviceability, aesthetics and perceived quality. When related to higher education, most of the dimensions reference academic areas. The student services area is not responsible for what transpires in the classroom, but student services professionals can impact the depth of learning (durability) and the degree to which knowledge, information and skills are up to date and accurate (reliability) in some areas, such as tutoring and library services.

Several dimensions relate directly to student services. Conformance is "...the degree to which an institution meets educational standards as well as its own promises to clients" (Owlia & Aspinwall, 1996, 13). Community colleges promise that assessment and advising will result in students being correctly placed and avoiding repetition or unnecessary coursework. Some colleges promise advanced library services – equal to those at universities. Serviceability is how an institution handles customer complaints. Perceived quality refers to the institution's reputation and image. They concluded that "A first step in satisfying customer needs is the determination of how quality dimensions/factors are perceived by each group" (19).

Satisfaction begins with internal customers, the employees. How an organization views its employees says a lot for how it will view its external customers. Nordstrom considers its employees individual entrepreneurs. They are encouraged to build relationships with customers, not only meeting needs, but anticipating them. When employees feel valued, external customers will as well. "Quality principles recognize that the customer is the center of every activity; and it engages all divisions, departments,

and levels of the organization to meet and exceed the customer's expectations" (Adams, 2000, 13).

Heskett, Sasser, Jr., and Schlesinger (in Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons, 2006, 209) developed the "satisfaction mirror" to describe the relationship between the customer and the employee.



Once an employee knows a customer, the cost of serving that customer decreases because the employee can anticipate the customer's needs. Gemme (1997) furthers this idea by demonstrating that it costs more to attract a new customer than retain an existing customer. Therefore, existing customer satisfaction is important to retention. The customer is loyal, appreciating a more productive and satisfying service encounter.

The Fitzsimmons further suggest the mirror provides an important lesson for management: Employees will treat customers as management treats employees. Even though community colleges are not in the profit business, they need repeat and referral customers to stay in business. Profitability, customer loyalty, and service value are integrally related to employee satisfaction and productivity.

“Every purchase is an event of some importance for the customer, whereas the same transaction usually is routine for the service provider” (Fitzsimmons & Fitzsimmons, 2006, 205). Customers approach a service encounter with varying expectations and attitudes. Even though employers may be bored with the routine, they must realize it is new for the customer. Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons (2006, 205) modified a service topology in which to view customers:

- The economizing customer. This customer wants to maximize the value obtained for his or her expenditures of time, effort, and money.
- The ethical customer. This customer feels a moral obligation to patronize socially responsible firms.
- The personalizing customer. This customer wants interpersonal gratification, such as recognition and conversation, from the service experience.
- The convenience customer. This customer has no interest in shopping for the service; convenience is the secret to attracting him or her.

These all apply to the community college in some aspect. A student may be attending due to the economic savings of tuition at a community college versus that of a private trade school or four-year university. Ethics are visible in how the employees handle day-to-day transactions. Personalization of the conversation can be initiated by the employee or the student. The personalities of the people involved will determine the resulting conversation or lack of it. Community colleges think convenience when it comes to online services, such as courses and registration.

Satisfaction starts with identifying what customers need or want compared to what the organization delivers. Once recognized, student services leaders should commit to decrease or eliminate the gaps in service. Leaders should also realize the difference between unrealistic customer expectations and unexpected service failure, as detailed below (Fitzsimmons & Fitzsimmons, 2006, 204):

<b>Unrealistic Customer Expectations</b>	<b>Unexpected Service Failure</b>
Unreasonable demands	Unavailable service
Demands against policies	Slow performance
Unacceptable treatment of employees	Unacceptable service

Customers have been taught “the customer is always right,” but according to this table, there are times when the customer is not right. This contradicts what many businesses profess, such as Stew Leonard’s philosophy (in Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry, 1990, 75) of:

Rule 1: The customer is always right.

Rule 2: If the customer is ever wrong, reread rule 1.

There is always the chance that multiple demands against a policy may be a sign the policy should be altered. When a service failure occurs, the employee’s attitude can play a large role in how the customer reacts. If the employee is apologetic and attempts other avenues to solve the problem, the customer will likely appreciate his or her attempt. The customer may still be dissatisfied, but they are likely to respect the organization for its training program and philosophy of “going the extra mile.”

Shumate (2001) reviewed Stodt’s institutional process of student satisfaction as a way of the college attaining its goals of quality education, student development, and retention of students. Satisfaction is the sum of a student’s positive involvement with an academic area, extracurricular activities, fellow classmates, and faculty. Community colleges serve a lot of commuter students. McCully (1980) found commuter students are less satisfied with their academic programs than other students. Dissatisfaction could be attributed to the fact that commuter students face difficult life-balance issues regarding finances, family, transportation, jobs, and lack of an academic support system, including faculty relationships. They do not have time to participate in campus activities, and they

are unlikely to form close friendships with classmates. Stennis suggested in order to serve this indispensable segment of the community college population, student services leaders need to find out what colleges can do in order to engage commuter students at a higher level. Concerning nontraditional students, Stennis (2004, 48) found, “The older students are, the more satisfied they are with the student services offered.”

Student satisfaction is often related to academic achievement, learning and development, and attrition. Alfred and others (1992) suggest core indicators, such as fall to fall persistence, can point to satisfaction or dissatisfaction. This line of reasoning can be debunked because students may continue, although dissatisfied, solely to complete their goals. Furthermore, fall to fall persistence statistics do not distinguish between academic programs and student support services.

### **Models of Service Quality**

Considering that services are intangible, heterogeneous, and that the customer is a participant, Haywood-Farmer (1987) agrees that customer expectations should be identified. He pointed out that physical facilities and processes influence operations such as flow, capacity and flexibility. People’s verbal and non-verbal behavior, including complaint resolution, directly affects the service encounter. Professional judgment is important to the perceived service quality.

Any emphasis on one area can lead to poor service quality. If procedures are overemphasized, then the individual’s importance is lessened and the customer feels like one of the masses. If behavior is overemphasized, then the technical aspect of the job may be neglected. Customers do not want to want to frequent businesses whose employees are not knowledgeable. If too much emphasis is placed on professional judgment, then the customer may feel neglected.

Service quality is a fine balance with several factors to consider. Haywood-Farmer (1987) suggested that different types of service organizations can learn from each other, even when services provided are very different. It is also reasonable to focus on

different aspects of the service encounter depending on the type of service provided. For example, factories may not need to focus on the customer because they operate separately. Back rooms of banks and post offices are often automated for efficiency, so the importance of behavior is reduced.

Kano et al developed a two-way model of quality that considered an objective aspect to determine if an attribute is present or absent and a subjective aspect to determine a sense of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The following represent a summary of their categories (Schvaneveldt, Enkawa & Miyakawa, 1991, 154 – 155):

*Attractive quality element.* Attribute whose presence gives satisfaction, but whose absence is accepted without causing dissatisfaction.

*One-dimensional quality element.* Attribute whose presence gives satisfaction, and absence causes dissatisfaction.

*Must-be quality element.* Attribute whose presence is accepted without creating satisfaction, but whose absence causes dissatisfaction.

*Indifferent quality element.* Attribute whose presence and absence give neither satisfaction nor dissatisfaction.

*Reverse quality element.* Attribute whose presence causes dissatisfaction, and absence gives satisfaction.

Gronroos' (2001) model of service quality focused on image influencing expected and perceived service experiences. An organization's know-how is evident in how well the employees utilize technical solutions as well as what machines and systems are in place to improve quality. Functional qualities revolve around the customer-orientation of employees and systems. Although Gronroos distinguished between technical quality and functional quality, he admitted that one is not enough to satisfy customers. In fact, all of these dimensions are interrelated. He concluded that in order to maintain a small gap in expected service and perceived service, organizations must not make unrealistic promises through traditional marketing campaigns or through word-of-mouth advertising. He also



believed that managers must realize it is critical to understand how technical and functional qualities are perceived by customers.

### **Models of Student Satisfaction**

Benjamin and Hollings (1997) investigated the few student satisfaction models in existence based on their ecological model. Their argument is ecological models “...tend to be complex rather than simple, interactive rather than linear, and sensitive to context rather than acontextual” (Benjamin & Hollings, 1997, 214). Their complex model includes conditioning variables: institution characteristics, family background, and generational studies. These variables are thought to affect independent variables: academic factors, social relations, goals and expectations, cognitive discrepancies, and life events. Independent variables are found to affect student satisfaction. Mediating variables such as living arrangements, family interaction, the self, meaning structure, support, health status, and employment status also factor into the equation. Benjamin and Hollings (1997, 223) found “social relationships and self-evaluations played a direct and central role in student satisfaction.” Although difficult to understand the web of relationships illustrated by the authors, they draw four general conclusions (225):

1. Student life satisfaction is shaped primarily by behavioral factors, which differs from earlier models that focus on cognitive factors.
2. Positive living conditions (not location-specific) contribute positively to student satisfaction.
3. Females regard their experiences holistically and focus on close personal relationships, whereas males focus on themselves in relation to recent events.
4. Fifty percent of satisfaction can be explained by this model, which is higher and more multi-dimensional than previous models.

Practical implications for student services evolved from Benjamin and Hollings’ work. Not only did they highlight the importance of orientation programs, but they also suggested advising programs be created to encourage changing programs for the right

reason or deter unnecessary changes based on “poorly thought out, impulsive or exploratory” (Benjamin & Hollings, 1997, 227) decisions. Due to the importance of parental relationships, they recommend parent newsletters be distributed and family counseling be included in support services.

Benjamin and Hollings critiqued previous work by Witt & Handal and Michalos (in Benjamin & Hollings, 1997), in which they use discrepancy models to compare student expectations to student experience. Witt and Handal introduced the *fit model* in 1984, focusing on the student’s personality matching the college environment, but other studies reportedly showed that community was more responsible for differences in fit. Michalos’ 1993 *multiple discrepancy theory* explained 50% of variance in educational satisfaction. Criticism claimed these models are not specific; they “ignore multiple fits” (Benjamin & Hollings, 1997, 214) and are incomplete in explaining or analyzing other potential explanations.

Okun and Weir’s 1990 *judgment model* described student satisfaction based on environmental experiences impacted by cognitive processes. Hatcher et al.’s 1992 *investment model* defined satisfaction as a function of rewards minus cost. Both studies, according to Benjamin and Hollings (1997), lack empirical data or do not account for alternative explanations in the variance. Neither explained the complex involvement of relationships.

Knox, Lindsay, and Kolb’s 1992 *legitimation model* was based on the perception that satisfied students believe a college degree will elevate them to a higher status in society. Despite setting out to focus on five areas of satisfaction (academic, social, recreation, job placement, school prestige), Benjamin and Hollings (1997) concentrated on the credentialing effect of the university, without regard to other factors influencing student satisfaction.

## **OTHER STUDIES ON STUDENT SATISFACTION**

Aldridge and Rowley (1998) reviewed Bell's student satisfaction survey at the University of Central England created by current students through the use of focus groups. In an attempt to utilize student input in making managerial decisions, students were asked to identify the importance of each area assessed. Managers focus on areas with high importance and low satisfaction. Students were asked to rank each area on a seven-point scale and to tell how often they used a particular area. The survey culminated in a 20-page document that took up to 45 minutes to complete.

Aldridge and Rowley (1998) compared survey topics of Harvey and Hill, noting that some surveys focus on facilities and usage, while others extend to service quality. They proclaim, "Whilst the managerial relevance of a tool based on facilities-specific questions is clear, any work on customer satisfaction must also be informed by the wider debate on the measurement of service quality" (199). Differences also exist in evaluating topics that relate to inside the classroom versus outside the classroom.

Aldridge and Rowley developed a survey based on the Student Charter, a form of contract between individual institutions and students. A Charter serves as the standard, so using it as the basis of a survey made sense. They used an electronic questionnaire at one location and a paper questionnaire at another, finding that the paper questionnaire returned a greater number of results. They concluded that an annual satisfaction survey is one method to identify areas of concern, but other approaches, such as withdrawal surveys and daily complaints, should be considered. Resolving complaints as they occur is important in keeping dissatisfaction away.

Elrod (2002) used a student satisfaction survey developed by Noel-Levitz, Inc., which measured academic advising, academic services, admissions and financial aid, campus climate, campus support services, concern for the individual, instructional effectiveness, registration effectiveness, responsiveness to diverse populations, safety and security, service excellence and student centeredness. Additionally, he asked for an

overall expectation and satisfaction rating as well as if the student would re-enroll. The 98-item survey took 20 minutes to complete.

Alegado (1997) discovered that students became aware of student services through the printed media, friends, other students, faculty and staff (in order). Ninety-seven percent of domestic students were aware of selected student services, although they only used 11 (35%) services. Seventy-seven percent of international students were aware of the same services and used only 10 (32%). Interestingly, domestic and international students were only satisfied with five and six (respectively) services, claiming they did not experience satisfaction or dissatisfaction with 25 or 24 other services. Alegado also divided his group by gender and age, finding that “None of the three groups was very dissatisfied or very satisfied with any of the services” (107).

Ruby (1996) used the SERVQUAL survey to assess student satisfaction with support services in four departments at a university. He found that “...no single standard of service quality necessarily fits every service department” and that “Differences in satisfaction levels may reflect differences in the type of service provided, rather than differences in the performance of service providers” (Ruby, 1996, 153). He also found that women hold higher service expectations than men.

Kerlin (2000) also used the SERVQUAL survey to assess satisfaction with student and support services at a community college. She found significant negative gaps between student expectations and perceptions in all service areas, indicating dissatisfaction. The largest dissatisfaction was in financial aid. Like Ruby, she found that females expect more than males when it comes to service. She found few significant gaps according to ethnicity.

## **SUMMARY**

Seamlessness in student services attempts to repair what many perceive as disjointed and fragmented partnerships and programs within and between academics and student services. Overcoming territoriality is the only way to focus on the holistic nature

of student development, the "...blurring of functional boundaries between academic and student affairs divisions..." (Rhyason, 2002, 21); after all, there is no distinction between learning and development in everyday life.

Collaboration also needs to be part of student services. Rhyason (2002, 22) charged "Not only have student services been reluctant to form alliances with academic divisions, they have resisted working across the boundaries that exist within their own units to develop seamless networks of support and experience for students." Engstrom and Tinto provided a collaborative vision in a non-hierarchical structure that, according to Rhyason (2002, 24) "...demands higher levels of commitment, interdependence, shared purpose, and tolerance for ambiguity and change" in order for faculty and student services professionals to focus on student development.

Characteristics of successful collaborations include a process "...that hears different viewpoints, assesses available information, forms options, develops logistics for actions, assesses results, and changes or realigns strategies as necessary" (Rhyason, 2002, 117). Knowledge sharing between professionals is also important. Professionals should be aware of collective strategies used with students across disciplines. A major foundation of collaboration is providing a "safe space" in which professionals can share their ideas without being judged. Authority and position should not override a good idea, but not all good ideas will be part of the solution.

The professionalization of student services is propelled by organizations such as the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators. Continuous improvement requires community colleges to examine their processes. How do colleges know they are succeeding in their mission and goals? Institutions can respond by assessing and measuring, which is also the way to make a case for student services when one of the greatest challenges to the profession is budget. Change requires planning and budgeting, which is becoming more participatory by including entire divisions and/or colleges. Student services divisions must prove their importance to the college's mission. Walters

(2003, 40) purported colleges must “...acknowledge, benchmark and redesign processes and systems to respond appropriately to our students’ needs...[each institution] must create a process that is welcoming, clear, and consistent in its goals and systems for its student body.”

Adams (2000) reported “Higher education’s methods of handling student administrative details are often uncoordinated, ineffective, and a principal source of dissatisfaction among college students.” Waddell (1996, 4) asserted “Managing effective student services will require the ability to innovate and to evolve to meet the demands of a changing environment.” She cited the need for radical change through the use of redesign tools and principles in order to increase quality and contain or reduce operating costs.

Lane Community College formed a redesign team of nine staff and one student to gather information on student services processes in order to rethink service delivery and propose changes. Talk about radical – they released the staff for 18 weeks to accomplish this project! Lane also hired external consultants to train the team in decision-making, problem-solving, and redesign methods. Consultants coached them in assessing and synthesizing information as well as how to develop recommendations. After reviewing interviews, surveys, forum results and industry best practices, the Lane team recommended changes in two phases over a five year period.

Organizations vary in where they are located on the continuum of service delivery, including human resources and technology. Some colleges require more advancements than others to achieve the same results. What is “radical” for one college may not be for another. In the case of Lane, new leadership and new management styles were just the beginning of redefining roles and developing cross-functional teams.

Many colleges have used cross-functional teams to form one-stop shops, allowing students to minimize the number of visits to various offices in order to conduct business. Generalists and specialists serve students more effectively with increased business hours,

advanced technology, and a collaborative work environment. Most importantly, the registration process is not as stressful for an incoming student as was the traditional model.

Some institutions have taken other radical changes by combining academic affairs and student services so each can develop a familiarity with the other. It allows student services personnel the opportunity to engage with faculty, which supports the “whole” student more than the traditional division between the two sides of the house. Both faculty and student services personnel gain perspective from this combination. Leaders who sit on the executive team understand how their decisions affect the “...learning, development, welfare, and rights of students” (Dungy, 2003).

Assessment of student services programs can lead to understanding student needs, how satisfied students are with services, and what changes can be made to improve students’ experiences on campus.

## **CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

“To improve student services, the understanding of student concerns requires continuous assessments, surveys, questionnaires and opinion polls that promote student satisfaction” (Adams, 2000, xii). The purpose of this study was threefold – 1) to determine how satisfied students are with student services at Tomball College 2) to determine what student services providers perceive the level of student satisfaction is with student services 3) to determine any gaps between what students and providers report.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

#### **Research Question 1:**

How satisfied are students with student services at Tomball College?

#### **Research Question 2:**

How satisfied do employees perceive students to be with student services at Tomball College?

#### **Research Question 3:**

What gaps, if any, exist between what students and employees report regarding satisfaction?

### **RESEARCH CONTEXT**

Tomball, Texas, is a town 28 miles northwest of downtown Houston with a population of just under 10,000 (<http://www.tomball.com/about.php>). Tomball College, part of the North Harris Montgomery Community College District (<http://www.nhmccd.edu>), had a rough beginning. In 1971, Tomball attempted to join with several areas to create a college district. When one of those areas withdrew its



interest, Tomball's chances of being part of the district were eliminated because it was no longer contiguous as required by state law. In 1981 Tomball won the opportunity to hold a special election and voters supported becoming part of the college district with a 3:1 margin. In 1985, NHMCCD determined that a new college should be located in Tomball. After much preparation, the college opened in August, 1988. Tomball College, which sits on 143 acres, and its satellite campus, Willow Chase Center, currently enroll approximately 7,000 students per semester. Tomball College recently added 72,000 square feet, now known as the Tomball College and Community Library, part of the Harris County Public Library system, which serves as a community facility and attraction.

Tomball College participates in the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), but information is reported as a district versus a single college. In addition, graduates complete an exit survey in order to measure their experience at Tomball College. Faculty, staff and students also participate in a visioning process every five years to set goals for the next five years. Only a limited number of issues receive college-wide attention as a result of visioning, although individual departments can use any other information gathered as an impetus for change. Student experiences in other areas will influence their perceptions of student services, but this study will measure satisfaction with student services specifically.

The following represents a snapshot of the student population at Tomball College in Fall 2005 (NHMCCD website):

White: 5,390

Black: 592

Hispanic: 1,070

Asian: 407

Other: 426

Males: 3,126

Females: 4, 715

Missing information: 45

Average age: 24

Student services at Tomball College include: registration, advising, financial aid, counseling, assessment center, extended learning center, library and student activities.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

The SERVQUAL instrument consisting of a 22-item scale was adapted to solicit responses from students regarding five service dimensions: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles. Kerlin (2000) also adapted the survey to analyze satisfaction in various areas of student services.

## **SAMPLE AND SAMPLING PROCEDURES**

The participants for this study were drawn from approximately 7,000 students at Tomball College. Eighty-four students and 65 employees responded to the electronic survey. Focus group participants included nine faculty and staff (Group 1), ten deans and directors (Group 2), and 15 students (Group 3).

The electronic survey was administered to all employees to determine overall perception of student satisfaction. Groups 1 (Faculty and Staff) and 2 (Deans and Directors) were combined in the electronic survey; however, they were separated during the focus groups. The researcher determined that faculty and staff had the potential to be influenced negatively or positively by the presence of deans and directors.

## **INSTRUMENTATION**

SERVQUAL originally surveyed 97 items covering 10 dimensions of service quality on a seven-point range scale. Customer expectations are compared to their perceptions, resulting in this formula by Tan and Kek (2004): Service Quality (Q) = Perception (P) – Expectation (E). Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry (1990) based the survey on five service sectors: appliance repair and maintenance, banking, long distance

telephone, securities brokerage and credit cards. They sampled 200 customers and began eliminating items and consolidating dimensions. Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1994, 207 & 1988) detail the final SERVQUAL battery:

Reliability is the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately. It includes:

- Providing services as promised

- Dependability in handling customers' service problems

- Performing services right the first time

- Providing services at the promised time

- Maintaining error-free records

Responsiveness is the willingness to help customers and provide prompt service.

It includes:

- Keeping customers informed about when services will be performed

- Prompt service to customers

- Willingness to help customers

- Readiness to respond to customers' requests

Assurance is the knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence, including:

- Employees who instill confidence in customers

- Making customers feel safe in their transactions

- Employees who are consistently courteous

- Employees who have the knowledge to answer customer questions

Empathy is how much care and individualized attention each customer receives.

Examples include:

- Giving customers individual attention

- Employees who deal with customers in a caring fashion

- Having the customer's best interest at heart

Employees who understand the needs of their customers

Convenient business hours

Tangibles include the appearance of the physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication materials, specifically:

Modern equipment

Visually appealing facilities

Employees who have a neat, professional appearance

Visually appealing materials associated with the service

This study utilizes an adapted SERVQUAL survey to determine student satisfaction and staff perception of student satisfaction.

#### **DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES**

An online survey (Appendix A) was available for students to access at any convenient time. The researcher requested faculty assistance with announcing this opportunity to students, posted flyers in classrooms, and approached students in the Commons to encourage participation. Schaefer and Dillman (1998) report that electronic surveys yield better quality data and more detailed responses to open-ended questions than mail surveys. For the purpose of this study, “staff” and “employees” may include support and professional staff, faculty, directors, and deans. When a specific group is declared, the information pertains only to that group.

#### **DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES**

##### **Survey**

The survey distinguished between the various areas of student services: registration, advising, financial aid, counseling, assessment center, extended learning center, library and student activities. Analysis of the electronic surveys was conducted first by department, then by question. SPSS software produced OLAP cubes, which identified means of each question in each area (registration, advising, etc...).

Independent sample T-tests calculated significance based on Levene's F. When a question was significant in three areas or more (registration, advising, etc...) it was included in the focus group questions.

### **Focus Groups**

Three focus groups were conducted to learn more about the most important issues revealed as a result of the survey. Students, faculty and staff, and deans and directors participated in separate groups to investigate specific questions. Fontana and Frey (2000) point out that a focus group is ordinarily used to ascertain opinions on service delivery. Additionally, "Focus groups reduce the distance between the researcher and the researched. The multivocality of the participants limits the control of the researcher over the research process" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, 57). The author feels students will be easier to interview in a group setting, in part by gaining ideas from what others have to say. The author was aware of potential problems with group interviewing as described by Fontana and Frey (2000, 652): "The results cannot be generalized; the emerging group culture may interfere with individual expression, and the group may be dominated by one person; and "groupthink" is a possible outcome."

### **Limitations**

This study at Tomball College was limited to making improvements at Tomball College. The researcher attempted to quantify certain measures by analyzing means and significance, but this study is qualitative in nature. Initial electronic survey results served only as a springboard for focus group discussions.

### **SUMMARY**

Tomball College desired to ascertain the level of student satisfaction with student services. In addition to finding out student views, the author desired to compare how employees perceived students' opinions of Tomball College's student services division.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The research was conducted to analyze student satisfaction and staff perception of student satisfaction with student services at Tomball College. The researcher conducted three focus groups: deans and administrators, faculty and staff, and students. The main research questions addressed in this study are:

#### **Research Question 1:**

How satisfied are students with student services at Tomball College?

#### **Research Question 2:**

How satisfied do employees perceive students to be with student services at Tomball College?

#### **Research Question 3:**

What gaps, if any, exist between what students and employees report regarding satisfaction?

An electronic survey was distributed; 84 students and 65 faculty and staff members responded. Means were determined for each question. Levene's test was also used to determine significance. Independent samples test were only used as a guide, as this study is qualitative in nature.

In order to narrow down the focus group discussion, the researcher decided to investigate any question for which at least three areas (Registration, Advising, Library, Student Activities, etc...) received a significant value, as determined by Levene's test.

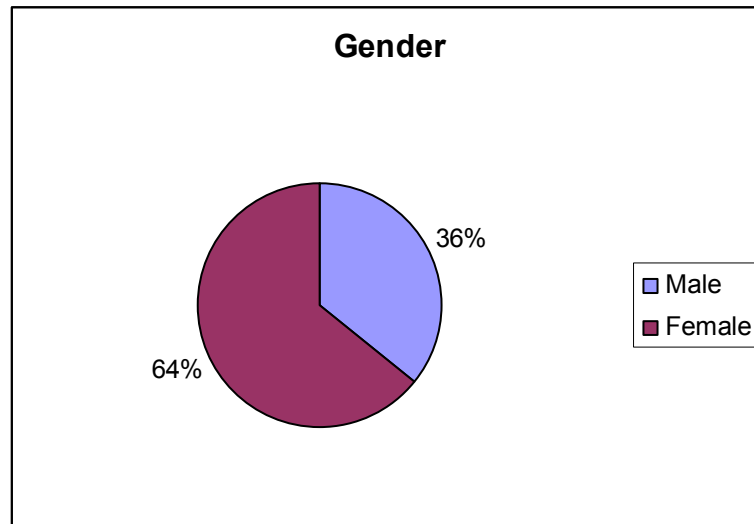
### **PARTICIPANTS**

Participants for the electronic survey were solicited with the assistance of 10 faculty members in various academic areas. Those who completed the electronic survey

were provided contact information if they desired to participate in the follow-up focus groups. The same faculty members also assisted in recruiting students for the student focus group. Faculty, staff, and deans and directors volunteered for the remaining two focus groups. An attempt was made to include 8-12 participants per focus group. Group 1 (faculty and staff) consisted of 10 participants. Group 2 (deans and directors) consisted of 9 participants. Group 3 (students) consisted of 15 participants.

## STUDENT SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

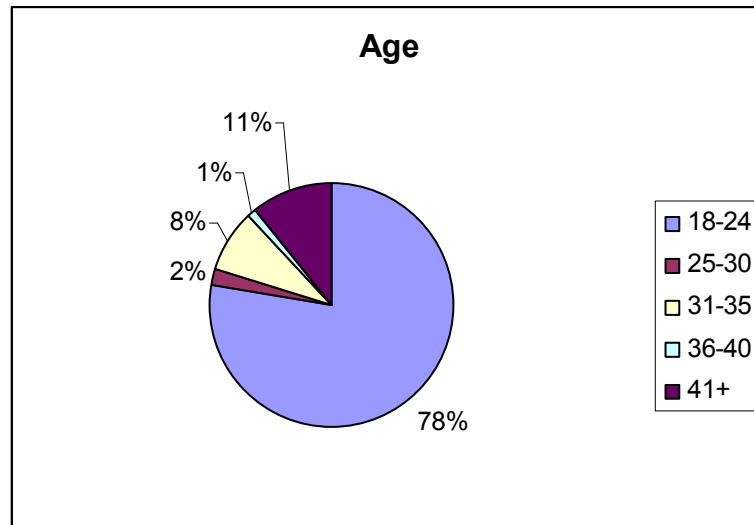
### Gender



Thirty male students (36%) and 54 female students (64%) responded to the electronic survey.

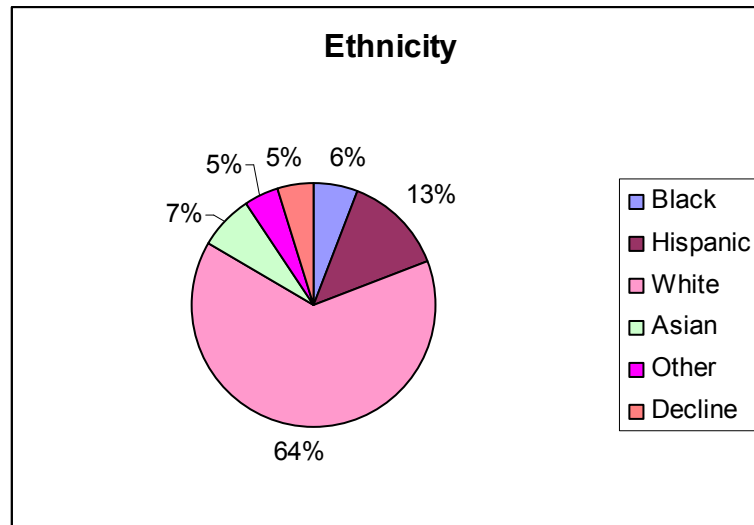


## Age



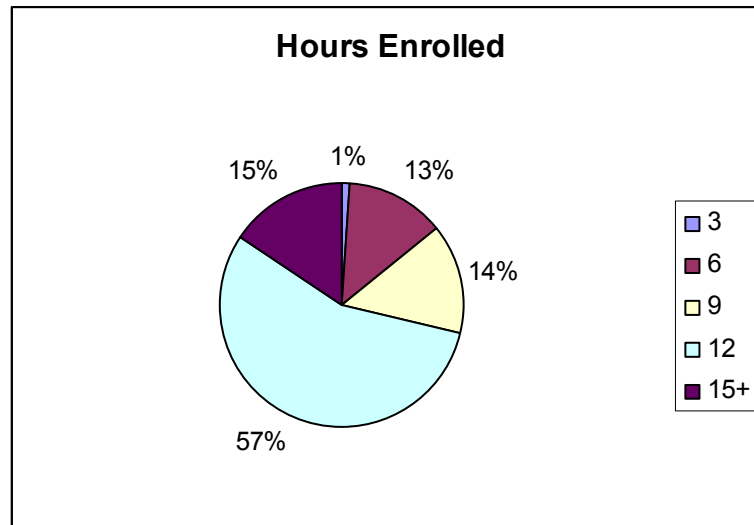
The majority of responses (78%) were submitted by 65 students who were 18 – 24 years of age. Two respondents (2%) were 25 – 30. Eight percent, or seven students, were 31 – 35. Only one student (1%) responded in the 36 – 40 age range. Nine students (11%) were over 40 years old.

## Ethnicity



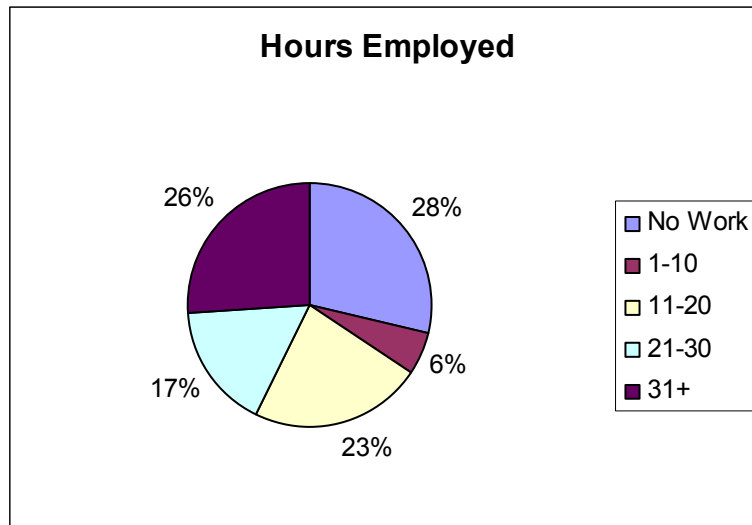
Students identified themselves according to NHMCCD's ethnic categories as follows: Black - 6 percent or 5 students, Hispanic - 13 percent or 11 students, White - 64 percent or 54 students, Asian - 7 percent or 6 students, and Other - 5 percent or 4 students. Five percent (4) declined to identify their ethnic background.

## Hours Enrolled



One respondent (1%) was enrolled for three credit hours. Eleven respondents (13%) were enrolled for six credit hours. Twelve respondents (14%) were enrolled for nine credit hours. The majority of respondents (57%) were enrolled in 12 credit hours. Thirteen respondents (15%) were enrolled in more than 15 credit hours.

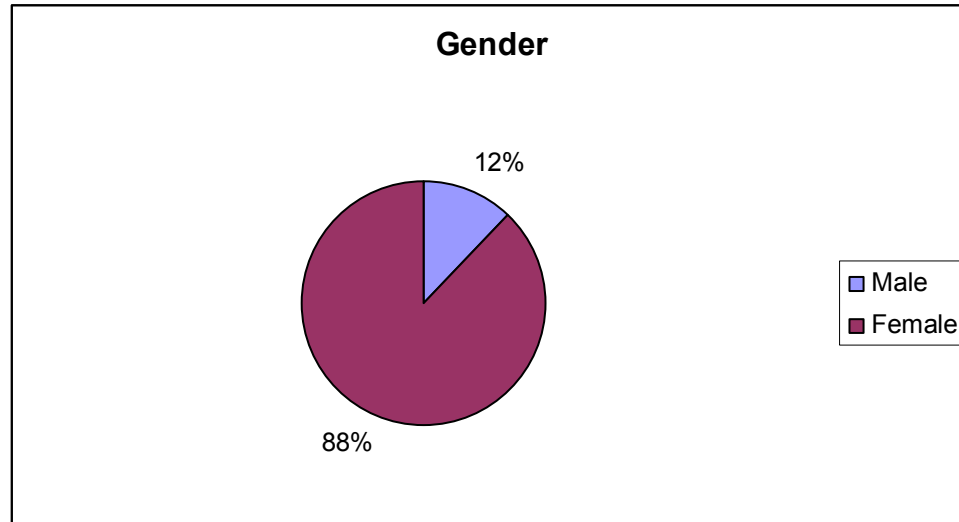
## Hours Employed



Twenty-eight percent (24) of respondents did not work. Five, or 6 percent, worked one to 10 hours per week. Nineteen, or 23 percent, worked 11 – 20 hours per week. Fourteen, or 17 percent, worked 21 – 30 hours per week. Twenty-two, or 26 percent, worked more than 30 hours per week.

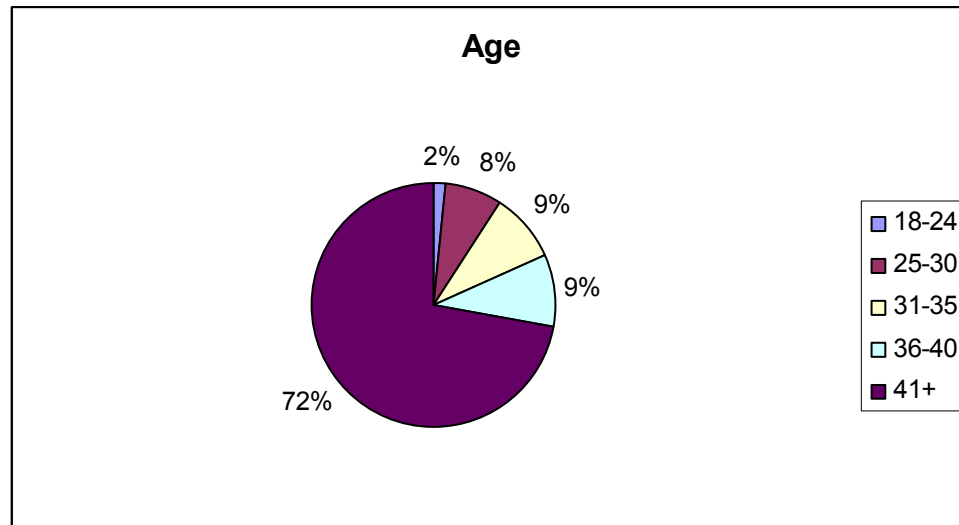
## EMPLOYEE SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

### Gender



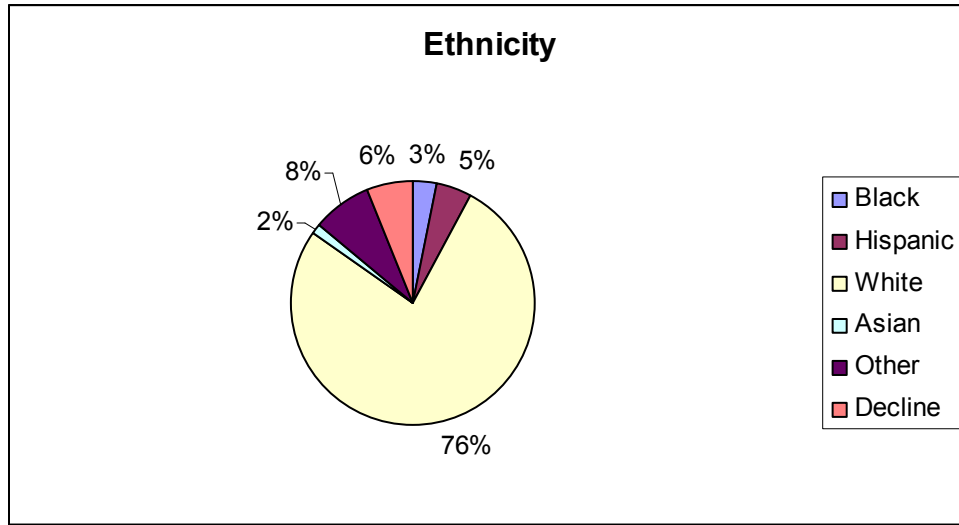
Twelve percent (8) of respondents were male, while 88 percent (57) were female.

## Age



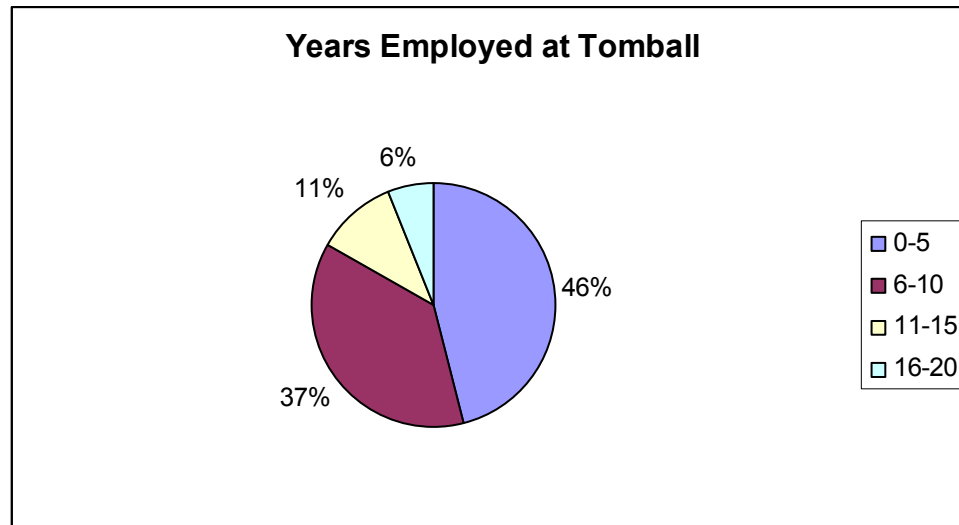
One respondent (2%) was in the 18 – 24 age range. Five respondents (8%) were in the 25 – 30 age range. Six were in the 31 – 35 age range, and six were in the 36 – 40 age range. The majority of respondents, 72 percent or 47, were above the age of 40.

## Ethnicity



Employees identified themselves according to NHMCCD's ethnic categories as follows: Black – three percent, or two employees, Hispanic – five percent, or three employees; White – 76 percent or 50 employees; Asian – 2% or 1 employee; Other – eight percent or 5 employees. Six percent, or 4 employees, declined to identify their ethnic background.

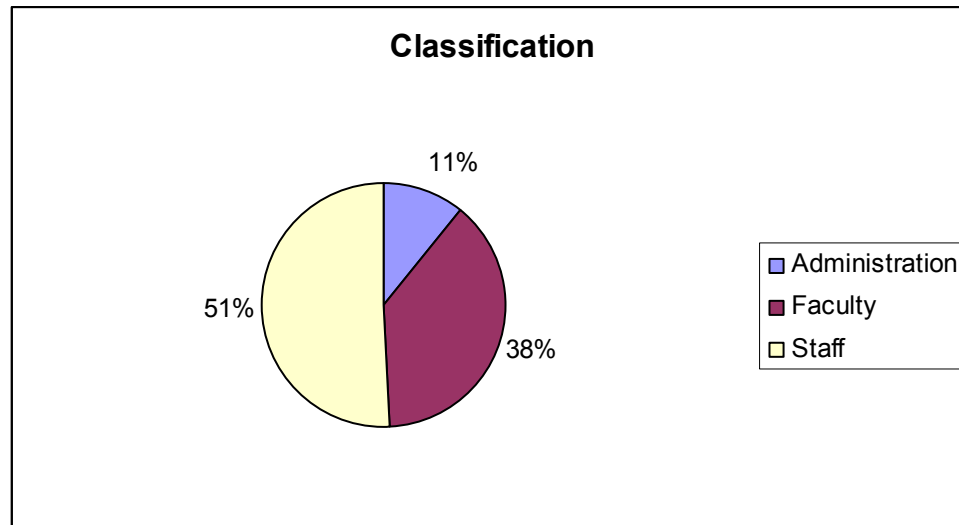
### Years Employed at Tomball



Thirty respondents (46%) were employed at Tomball College from 0 – 5 years. Twenty-four respondents (37%) were employed from 6 – 10 years. Seven respondents (11%) were employed from 11 – 15 years. Four respondents (6%) were employed from 16 – 20 years. It is possible employees in the last category were employed at NHMCCD for more than 20 years, as the district existed before Tomball College was built.

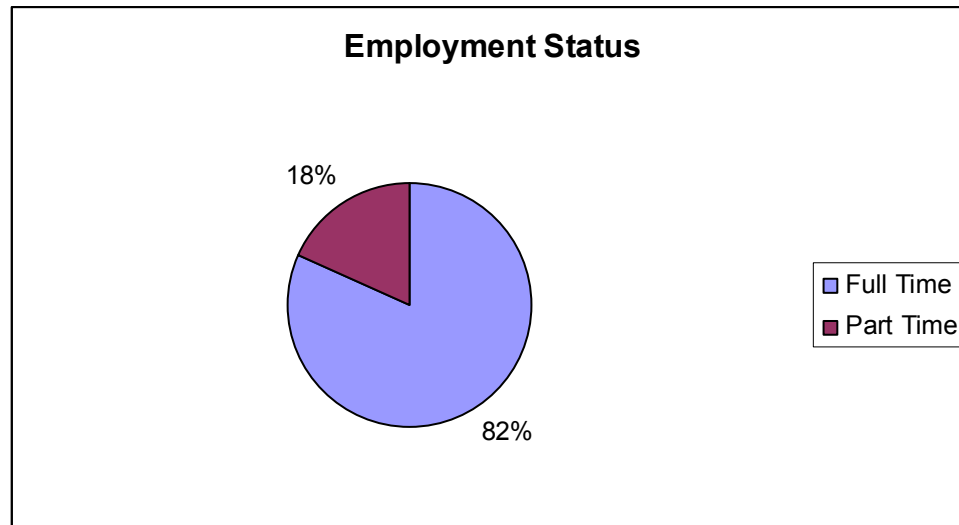


## Classification



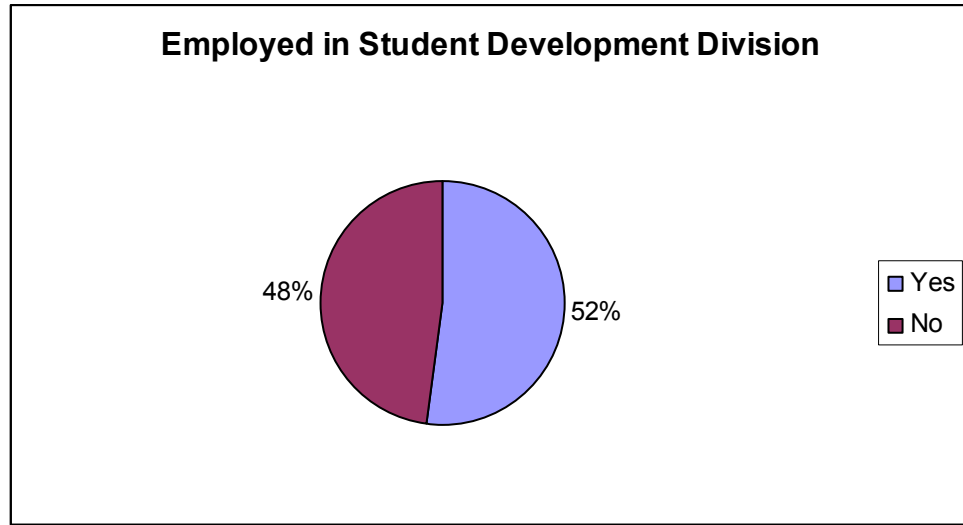
Seven respondents (11%) identified themselves as administration. Twenty-five faculty members (38%) responded to the survey. The majority of respondents, 33 (51%), were professional and support staff.

## Employment Status



Eighty-two percent of respondents (53) were full-time employees. Eighteen percent (12) were part time employees.

### Employed in Student Development Division



Fifty-two percent (34) of respondents were employed in the Student Development division, while forty-eight percent (31) were not.

## **TABLES BY DEPARTMENT**

Following are tables (categorized by student service area) representing each of 23 main questions in the electronic survey in the 10 student service areas. Levene's F and equal variances were used to determine each question's significance in each area. The researcher identified a question to be worthy of a focus group discussion when it tested significant in at least three student service areas, for example registration and advising.

Student N = Number of student responses

Student Mean = Average of student responses

Staff N = Number of staff responses

Staff Mean = Average of staff responses

Student – Staff Mean Difference = Difference of the Two Means

A negative difference designates students as more favorable than staff perceive.

Table 1 Registration:

	Student N	Student Mean	Staff N	Staff Mean	Student – Staff Mean Difference
Employees instill confidence - correct service	82	1.62	59	2.00	-.38
Safe and secure area	80	1.30	60	1.50	-.20
Employees consistently courteous	80	1.49	60	1.83	-.35
Employees have knowledge	81	1.70	59	2.25	-.55
Services provided in timeframe & deadlines	79	1.58	49	1.57	.01
Staff sincere interest in resolving problems	75	1.67	58	1.69	-.02
Services performed correctly first time	81	1.86	58	2.40	-.53
Services available at times promised	78	1.40	59	1.63	-.23
Records kept accurately	77	1.64	49	1.59	.04
Students given expected service time	81	1.77	49	1.88	-.11
Service is prompt	80	1.76	56	2.36	-.59
Staff willing to help students	78	1.50	61	1.70	-.20
Staff never too busy to respond	75	1.80	55	2.09	-.29
Modern equipment	77	1.45	57	1.72	-.26
Facilities visually appealing	79	1.56	61	2.02	-.46
Employees neat appearance	80	1.33	59	1.63	-.30
Materials are attractive	71	1.41	56	1.55	-.15
Staff provide individual attention	79	1.56	60	1.82	-.26
Hours of operation convenient	78	1.44	63	1.57	-.14
Employees give personal attention	77	1.60	59	1.85	-.25
Offices & policies have best interest	78	1.79	57	1.75	.04
Offices & policies understand student needs	79	1.59	58	1.84	-.25
Policies ensure fair treatment	75	1.45	54	1.65	-.19

Students are satisfied with Registration. Students are more favorable than staff regarding Registration.

Table 2 Advising:

	Student N	Student Mean	Staff N	Staff Mean	Student – Staff Mean Difference
Employees instill confidence - correct service	77	1.84	58	2.24	-.40
Safe and secure area	78	1.31	60	1.53	-.23
Employees consistently courteous	78	1.53	57	1.70	-.18
Employees have knowledge	77	1.96	59	2.56	-.60
Services provided in timeframe & deadlines	74	1.51	47	1.60	-.08
Staff sincere interest in resolving problems	74	1.70	53	1.70	.00
Services performed correctly first time	72	2.03	55	2.53	-.50
Services available at times promised	74	1.55	54	1.65	-.50
Records kept accurately	71	1.52	49	1.61	-.09
Students given expected service time	73	1.73	48	1.85	-.13
Service is prompt	74	1.82	54	2.35	-.53
Staff willing to help students	75	1.60	59	1.69	-.09
Staff never too busy to respond	75	1.88	54	2.15	-.27
Modern equipment	74	1.35	54	1.76	-.41
Facilities visually appealing	76	1.55	58	2.09	-.53
Employees neat appearance	78	1.27	58	1.52	-.25
Materials are attractive	68	1.40	52	1.50	-.10
Staff provide individual attention	75	1.56	58	1.76	-.20
Hours of operation convenient	77	1.39	58	1.52	-.13
Employees give personal attention	75	1.53	55	1.76	-.23
Offices & policies have best interest	74	1.66	55	1.89	-.23
Offices & policies understand student needs	76	1.70	56	1.82	-.12
Policies ensure fair treatment	73	1.47	54	1.69	-.22

Overall, students are satisfied with advising. Close agreement exists between staff and students regarding advising, with students being slightly more favorable.

Table 3 Financial Aid:

	Student N	Student Mean	Staff N	Staff Mean	Student – Staff Mean Difference
Employees instill confidence - correct service	44	1.93	47	1.70	.23
Safe and secure area	50	1.52	47	1.51	.01
Employees consistently courteous	47	1.49	49	1.55	-.06
Employees have knowledge	42	1.64	47	1.53	.11
Services provided in timeframe & deadlines	44	1.77	41	1.78	-.01
Staff sincere interest in resolving problems	41	1.59	48	1.60	-.02
Services performed correctly first time	45	1.93	44	1.77	.16
Services available at times promised	46	1.74	46	1.61	.13
Records kept accurately	45	1.69	40	1.58	.11
Students given expected service time	48	1.73	40	1.95	-.22
Service is prompt	46	1.80	43	2.02	-.22
Staff willing to help students	45	1.64	51	1.43	.21
Staff never too busy to respond	45	1.80	47	2.02	-.22
Modern equipment	48	1.35	46	1.98	-.62
Facilities visually appealing	49	1.47	53	2.04	-.57
Employees neat appearance	50	1.22	54	1.31	-.09
Materials are attractive	49	1.51	51	1.57	-.06
Staff provide individual attention	48	1.56	49	1.51	.05
Hours of operation convenient	48	1.46	51	1.73	-.27
Employees give personal attention	47	1.45	48	1.56	-.12
Offices & policies have best interest	50	1.52	50	1.70	-.18
Offices & policies understand student needs	49	1.53	50	1.58	-.05
Policies ensure fair treatment	49	1.59	47	1.68	-.09

Students are satisfied with financial aid services. Employees and students are in close agreement with financial aid services.

Table 4 Counseling:

	Student N	Student Mean	Staff N	Staff Mean	Student – Staff Mean Difference
Employees instill confidence - correct service	48	1.81	47	1.62	.20
Safe and secure area	55	1.36	50	1.16	.20
Employees consistently courteous	55	1.49	49	1.18	.31
Employees have knowledge	50	1.96	43	1.47	.49
Services provided in timeframe & deadlines	47	1.45	33	1.45	-.01
Staff sincere interest in resolving problems	45	1.56	45	1.22	.33
Services performed correctly first time	47	1.74	42	1.55	.20
Services available at times promised	46	1.43	41	1.22	.22
Records kept accurately	43	1.30	31	1.23	.08
Students given expected service time	48	1.50	35	1.26	.24
Service is prompt	45	1.67	41	1.63	.03
Staff willing to help students	51	1.53	52	1.23	.30
Staff never too busy to respond	48	1.69	40	1.43	.26
Modern equipment	53	1.26	41	1.63	-.37
Facilities visually appealing	56	1.45	52	1.71	-.27
Employees neat appearance	57	1.28	51	1.14	.14
Materials are attractive	48	1.54	44	1.36	.18
Staff provide individual attention	49	1.47	50	1.20	.27
Hours of operation convenient	52	1.42	50	1.70	-.28
Employees give personal attention	51	1.51	48	1.19	.32
Offices & policies have best interest	51	1.67	48	1.17	.50
Offices & policies understand student needs	52	1.63	50	1.34	.29
Policies ensure fair treatment	53	1.60	45	1.22	.38

Students are satisfied with counseling services. Employees perceive students to be satisfied with counseling services. Student satisfaction and employee perception are in agreement.



Table 5 Career Services:

	Student N	Student Mean	Staff N	Staff Mean	Student – Staff Mean Difference
Employees instill confidence - correct service	35	1.60	29	1.69	-.09
Safe and secure area	42	1.36	30	1.07	.29
Employees consistently courteous	38	1.24	32	1.22	.02
Employees have knowledge	36	1.50	33	1.45	.05
Services provided in timeframe & deadlines	27	1.41	21	1.24	.17
Staff sincere interest in resolving problems	33	1.21	27	1.11	.10
Services performed correctly first time	35	1.69	26	1.27	.42
Services available at times promised	33	1.45	27	1.22	.23
Records kept accurately	31	1.42	20	1.25	.17
Students given expected service time	34	1.26	24	1.21	.06
Service is prompt	29	1.48	25	1.32	.16
Staff willing to help students	37	1.30	34	1.15	.15
Staff never too busy to respond	35	1.51	28	1.57	-.06
Modern equipment	37	1.30	27	1.63	-.33
Facilities visually appealing	43	1.44	39	1.59	-.15
Employees neat appearance	48	1.19	41	1.10	.09
Materials are attractive	39	1.21	33	1.36	-.16
Staff provide individual attention	40	1.35	32	1.38	-.03
Hours of operation convenient	42	1.33	32	1.47	-.14
Employees give personal attention	35	1.17	31	1.35	-.18
Offices & policies have best interest	39	1.28	32	1.19	.09
Offices & policies understand student needs	40	1.45	33	1.27	.18
Policies ensure fair treatment	39	1.49	33	1.30	.18

Students are satisfied with career services. Close agreement exists between student satisfaction and employee perception of their satisfaction.

Table 6 Disability Services:

	Student N	Student Mean	Staff N	Staff Mean	Student – Staff Mean Difference
Employees instill confidence - correct service	20	1.65	38	2.03	-.38
Safe and secure area	26	1.27	42	1.33	-.06
Employees consistently courteous	18	1.22	41	1.46	-.24
Employees have knowledge	21	1.24	39	1.51	-.27
Services provided in timeframe & deadlines	20	1.30	31	1.90	-.60
Staff sincere interest in resolving problems	19	1.26	42	1.64	-.38
Services performed correctly first time	21	1.57	36	1.92	-.35
Services available at times promised	23	1.26	33	1.73	-.47
Records kept accurately	17	1.65	25	1.72	-.07
Students given expected service time	23	1.22	29	1.90	-.68
Service is prompt	23	1.39	34	2.29	-.90
Staff willing to help students	28	1.46	41	1.37	.10
Staff never too busy to respond	23	1.39	33	1.94	-.55
Modern equipment	27	1.52	31	1.61	-.09
Facilities visually appealing	35	1.57	35	1.54	.03
Employees neat appearance	30	1.43	40	1.20	.23
Materials are attractive	33	1.42	32	1.25	.17
Staff provide individual attention	29	1.48	43	1.60	-.12
Hours of operation convenient	30	1.43	40	1.75	-.32
Employees give personal attention	26	1.35	41	1.51	-.17
Offices & policies have best interest	30	1.23	41	1.32	-.08
Offices & policies understand student needs	26	1.50	42	1.38	.12
Policies ensure fair treatment	30	1.40	40	1.45	-.05

Students report satisfaction with disability services. Close agreement exists between student satisfaction and employee perception, but students are more favorable than staff, particularly regarding promptness.

Table 7 Assessment Center:

	Student N	Student Mean	Staff N	Staff Mean	Student – Staff Mean Difference
Employees instill confidence - correct service	66	1.47	56	1.36	.11
Safe and secure area	71	1.27	55	1.18	.09
Employees consistently courteous	63	1.41	50	1.32	.09
Employees have knowledge	59	1.44	54	1.33	.11
Services provided in timeframe & deadlines	60	1.32	47	1.17	.15
Staff sincere interest in resolving problems	59	1.32	50	1.26	.06
Services performed correctly first time	63	1.35	51	1.37	-.02
Services available at times promised	62	1.29	50	1.24	.05
Records kept accurately	57	1.25	40	1.20	.05
Students given expected service time	62	1.34	46	1.22	.12
Service is prompt	61	1.38	50	1.32	.06
Staff willing to help students	63	1.41	52	1.10	.32
Staff never too busy to respond	64	1.33	48	1.56	-.23
Modern equipment	68	1.22	48	1.46	-.24
Facilities visually appealing	70	1.47	55	1.44	.04
Employees neat appearance	66	1.30	50	1.40	-.10
Materials are attractive	53	1.40	40	1.43	-.03
Staff provide individual attention	64	1.25	52	1.27	-.02
Hours of operation convenient	68	1.57	57	1.35	.22
Employees give personal attention	65	1.38	51	1.39	-.01
Offices & policies have best interest	62	1.40	48	1.23	.17
Offices & policies understand student needs	63	1.41	49	1.31	.11
Policies ensure fair treatment	65	1.31	45	1.24	.06

Students are satisfied with service provided by the assessment center. There is close agreement between student satisfaction and employee perception of student satisfaction.

Table 8 Library:

	Student N	Student Mean	Staff N	Staff Mean	Student – Staff Mean Difference
Employees instill confidence - correct service	76	1.37	55	1.27	.10
Safe and secure area	77	1.21	56	1.36	-.15
Employees consistently courteous	73	1.29	52	1.35	-.06
Employees have knowledge	73	1.34	52	1.27	.07
Services provided in timeframe & deadlines	66	1.26	43	1.12	.14
Staff sincere interest in resolving problems	68	1.37	44	1.18	.19
Services performed correctly first time	68	1.46	47	1.30	.16
Services available at times promised	66	1.35	50	1.18	.17
Records kept accurately	61	1.31	37	1.32	-.01
Students given expected service time	69	1.46	44	1.25	.21
Service is prompt	69	1.41	46	1.28	.12
Staff willing to help students	72	1.39	52	1.12	.27
Staff never too busy to respond	68	1.44	45	1.47	-.03
Modern equipment	74	1.16	50	1.52	-.36
Facilities visually appealing	76	1.26	55	1.25	.01
Employees neat appearance	72	1.36	52	1.42	-.06
Materials are attractive	63	1.35	43	1.33	.02
Staff provide individual attention	68	1.46	50	1.28	.18
Hours of operation convenient	70	1.61	52	1.35	.27
Employees give personal attention	69	1.42	51	1.31	.11
Offices & policies have best interest	69	1.64	48	1.19	.45
Offices & policies understand student needs	71	1.44	48	1.29	.14
Policies ensure fair treatment	71	1.32	46	1.35	-.02

Students are satisfied with library services. There is close agreement between student satisfaction and employee perception regarding library services.

Table 9 Extended Learning Center:

	Student N	Student Mean	Staff N	Staff Mean	Student – Staff Mean Difference
Employees instill confidence - correct service	43	1.35	51	1.43	-.08
Safe and secure area	46	1.24	48	1.25	-.01
Employees consistently courteous	42	1.26	48	1.19	.07
Employees have knowledge	39	1.41	46	1.33	.08
Services provided in timeframe & deadlines	42	1.38	41	1.15	.23
Staff sincere interest in resolving problems	42	1.29	45	1.16	.13
Services performed correctly first time	45	1.51	47	1.43	.09
Services available at times promised	45	1.42	45	1.16	.27
Records kept accurately	41	1.27	35	1.37	-.10
Students given expected service time	46	1.48	43	1.28	.20
Service is prompt	44	1.30	42	1.36	-.06
Staff willing to help students	47	1.45	49	1.08	.37
Staff never too busy to respond	44	1.41	44	1.52	-.11
Modern equipment	50	1.28	47	1.57	-.29
Facilities visually appealing	48	1.29	52	1.52	-.23
Employees neat appearance	48	1.21	49	1.37	-.16
Materials are attractive	44	1.30	40	1.35	-.05
Staff provide individual attention	46	1.22	49	1.22	-.01
Hours of operation convenient	49	1.51	51	1.53	-.02
Employees give personal attention	44	1.32	49	1.29	.03
Offices & policies have best interest	48	1.33	47	1.13	.21
Offices & policies understand student needs	48	1.42	48	1.25	.17
Policies ensure fair treatment	46	1.28	45	1.22	.06

Students are satisfied with services provided by the Extended Learning Center. Close agreement exists between student satisfaction and employee perception of student satisfaction.

Table 10 Student Activities:

	Student N	Student Mean	Staff N	Staff Mean	Student – Staff Mean Difference
Employees instill confidence - correct service	53	1.57	48	1.81	-.25
Safe and secure area	55	1.45	48	1.48	-.02
Employees consistently courteous	44	1.39	43	1.47	-.08
Employees have knowledge	47	1.57	41	1.59	-.01
Services provided in timeframe & deadlines	46	1.50	36	1.53	-.03
Staff sincere interest in resolving problems	45	1.49	43	1.70	-.21
Services performed correctly first time	45	1.53	40	1.65	-.12
Services available at times promised	47	1.51	40	1.60	-.09
Records kept accurately	45	1.53	27	1.52	.01
Students given expected service time	48	1.52	35	1.54	-.02
Service is prompt	48	1.48	33	1.48	-.01
Staff willing to help students	50	1.48	43	1.28	.20
Staff never too busy to respond	47	1.47	37	1.59	-.13
Modern equipment	49	1.35	37	1.54	-.19
Facilities visually appealing	50	1.32	44	1.73	-.41
Employees neat appearance	52	1.58	47	1.66	-.08
Materials are attractive	50	1.38	44	1.16	.22
Staff provide individual attention	48	1.48	42	1.57	-.09
Hours of operation convenient	47	1.79	41	1.66	.13
Employees give personal attention	46	1.52	40	1.53	.00
Offices & policies have best interest	50	1.52	43	1.47	.05
Offices & policies understand student needs	52	1.71	44	1.57	.14
Policies ensure fair treatment	51	1.57	38	1.53	.04

Students are satisfied with Student Activities. Employees feel students are satisfied with Student Activities. Close agreement exists between student satisfaction and employee perception.

## SIGNIFICANT RESULTS

Table 11 Significant Results from Electronic Survey

<b>Question Tested Significant</b>	<b>Student Services Areas in Which Question Tested Significant</b>
Employees have the knowledge to answer students' questions accurately	Registration Advising Counseling
Services are provided within the time-frames and deadlines promised	Registration Advising Disability Services
Staff members express a willingness to help students	Assessment Center Library Extended Learning Center
Equipment appears to be modern	Advising Library Extended Learning Center
Physical facilities are visually appealing	Registration Advising Financial Aid Student Activities
Offices and policies have the students' best interest at heart	Counseling Library Extended Learning Center

The researcher included these questions in the focus group discussion in addition to questions regarding agreement in dissatisfaction based on the electronic survey results.

## **EMPLOYEE FIGURES BY QUESTION**

Following are charts representing the 23 main questions and results from the electronic survey. Employees rated each student services area based on their perception of student satisfaction. Responses in each of the 10 student services areas are divided into “strongly agree,” “somewhat agree,” “no experience,” “somewhat disagree,” and “strongly disagree.”



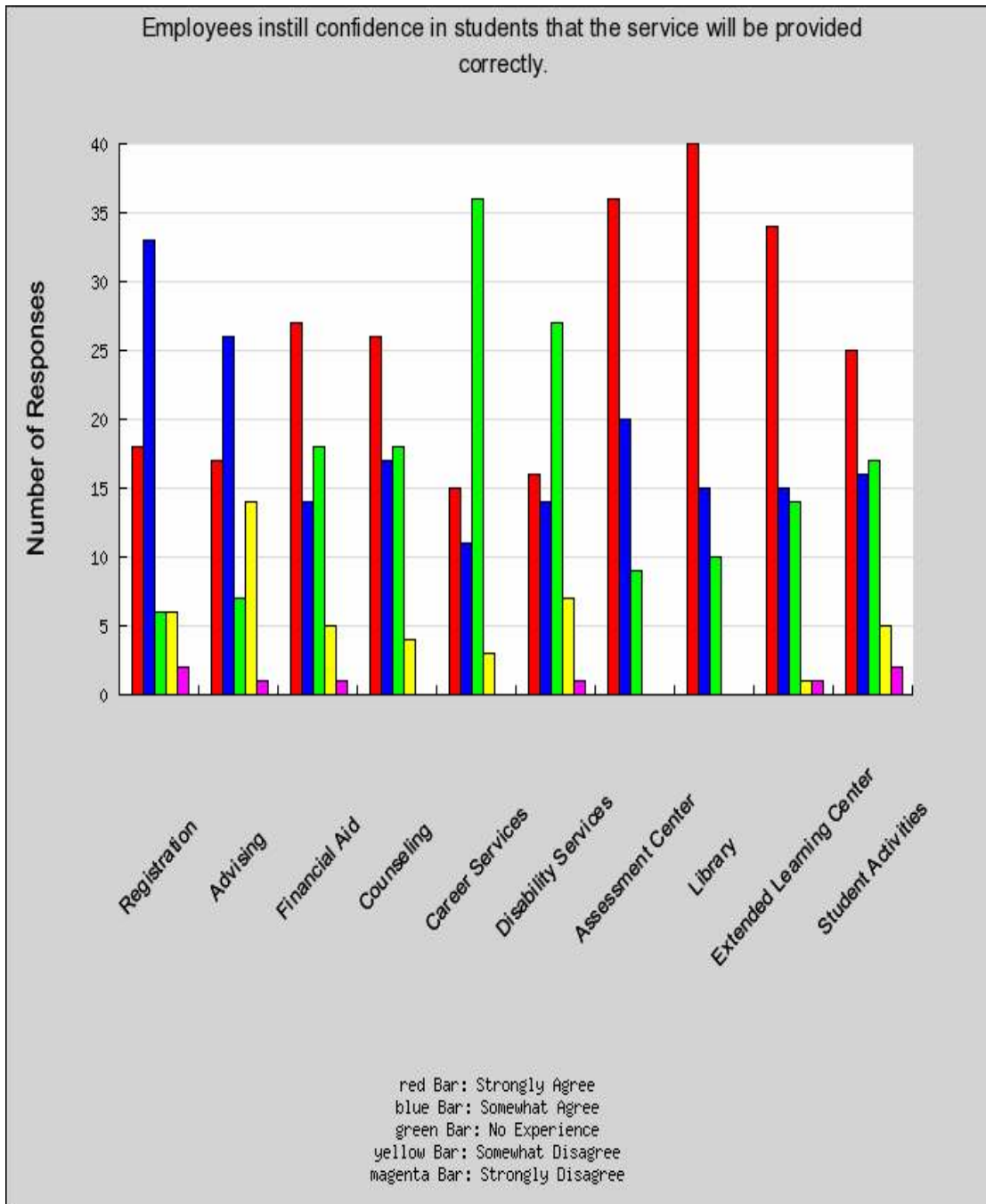


Figure 1. Employees Instill Confidence Service will be Provided Correctly

Staff are overwhelmingly assured that students are somewhat or strongly satisfied with being served correctly. The Assessment Center, Library, and the Extended Learning Center rank significantly higher than other areas, although most areas rank above 50% satisfaction. Career services and Disability Services rank below 50%, but it is important to note the “No Experience” ratings of 55% and 42% respectively.

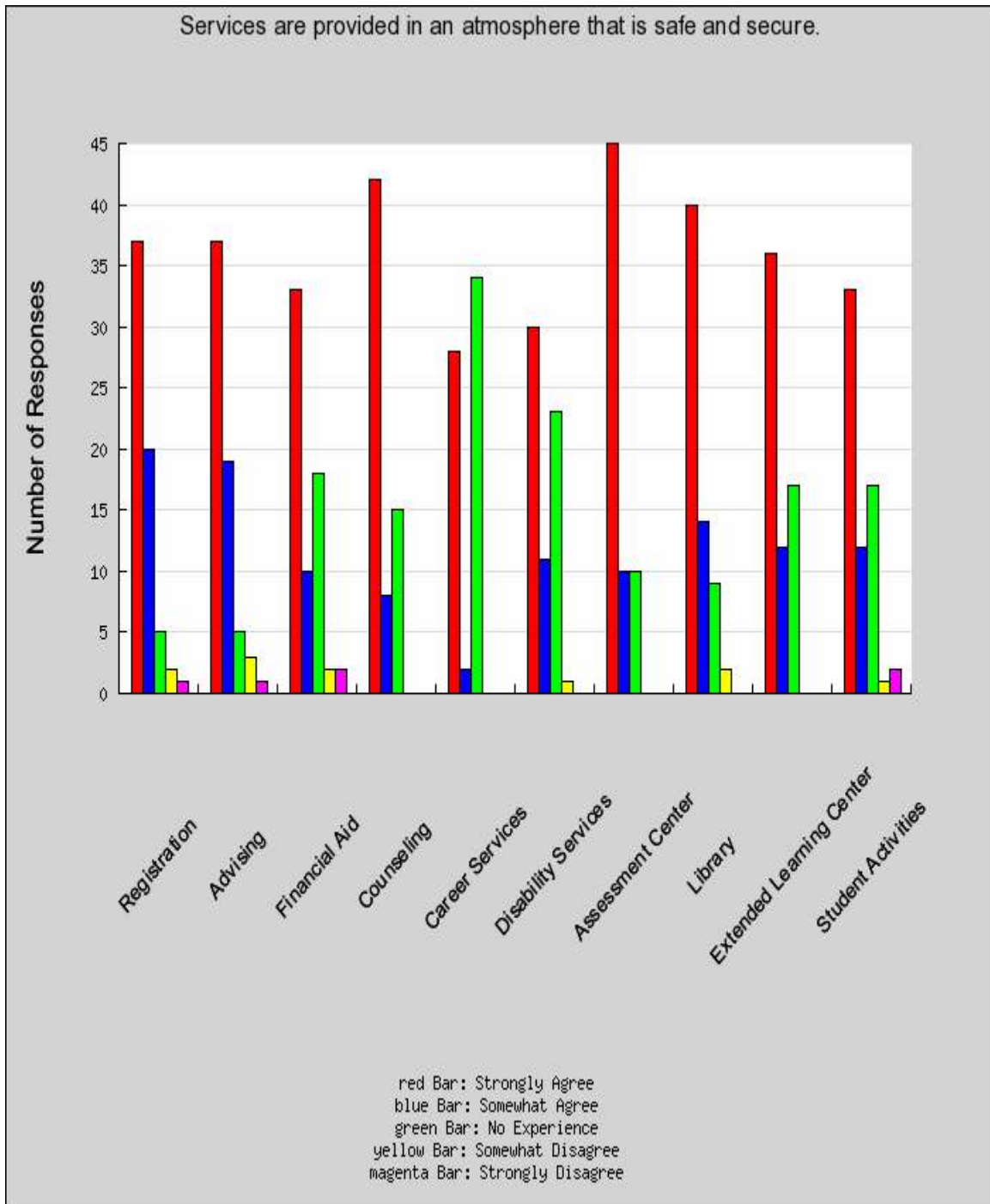


Figure 2 Services are Provided in an Atmosphere that is Safe and Secure

Staff are assured of the safety and security involved with student services. Career Services falls below 50% satisfaction, but no staff members disagreed. Oddly, the results clearly show the “No Experience” bar is prominent, although staff must be aware that services are rendered in the same area as others.

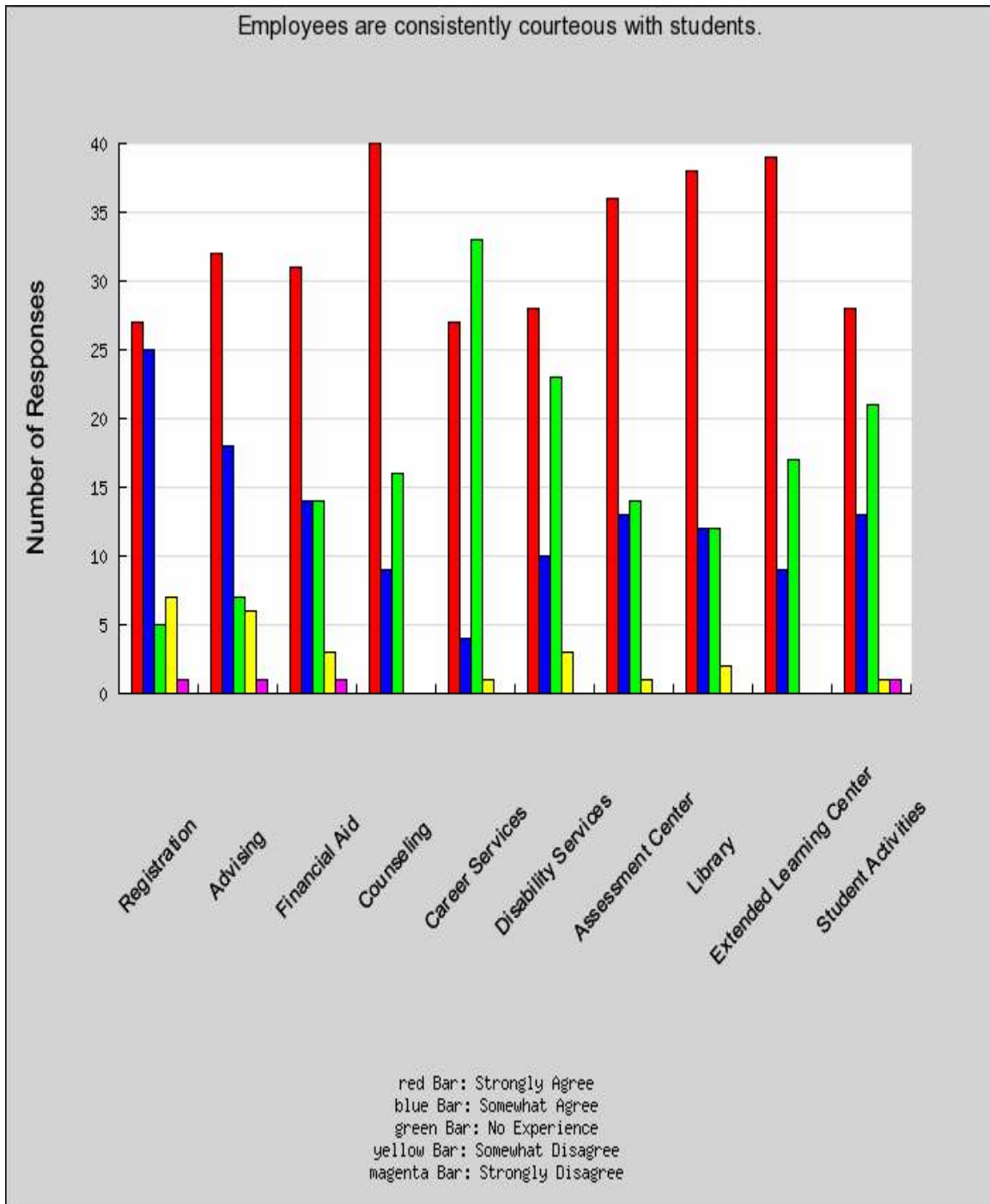


Figure 3 Employees are Consistently Courteous with Students

Staff believe colleagues are consistently courteous while delivering student services. A few dissenting votes could represent minor annoyances experienced in the past.

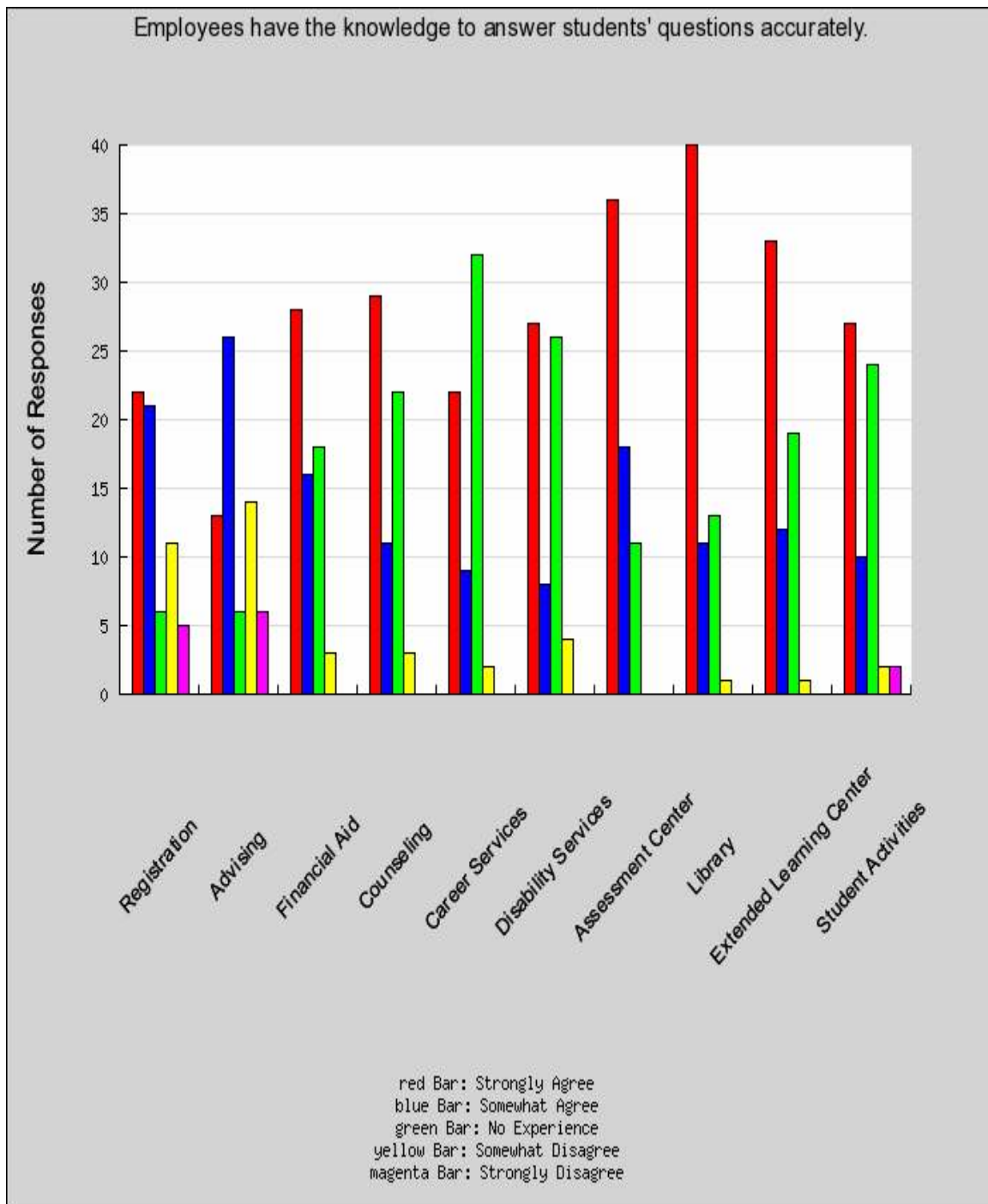


Figure 4 Employees Have Knowledge to Answer Students' Questions Accurately

Registration and Advising scored high in dissatisfaction. The difference between staff perception and student satisfaction tested as significant according to independent sample T-tests. Employees are not confident fellow colleagues are equipped to answer students' questions accurately. On the other hand, Counseling ranked as significant in satisfaction.

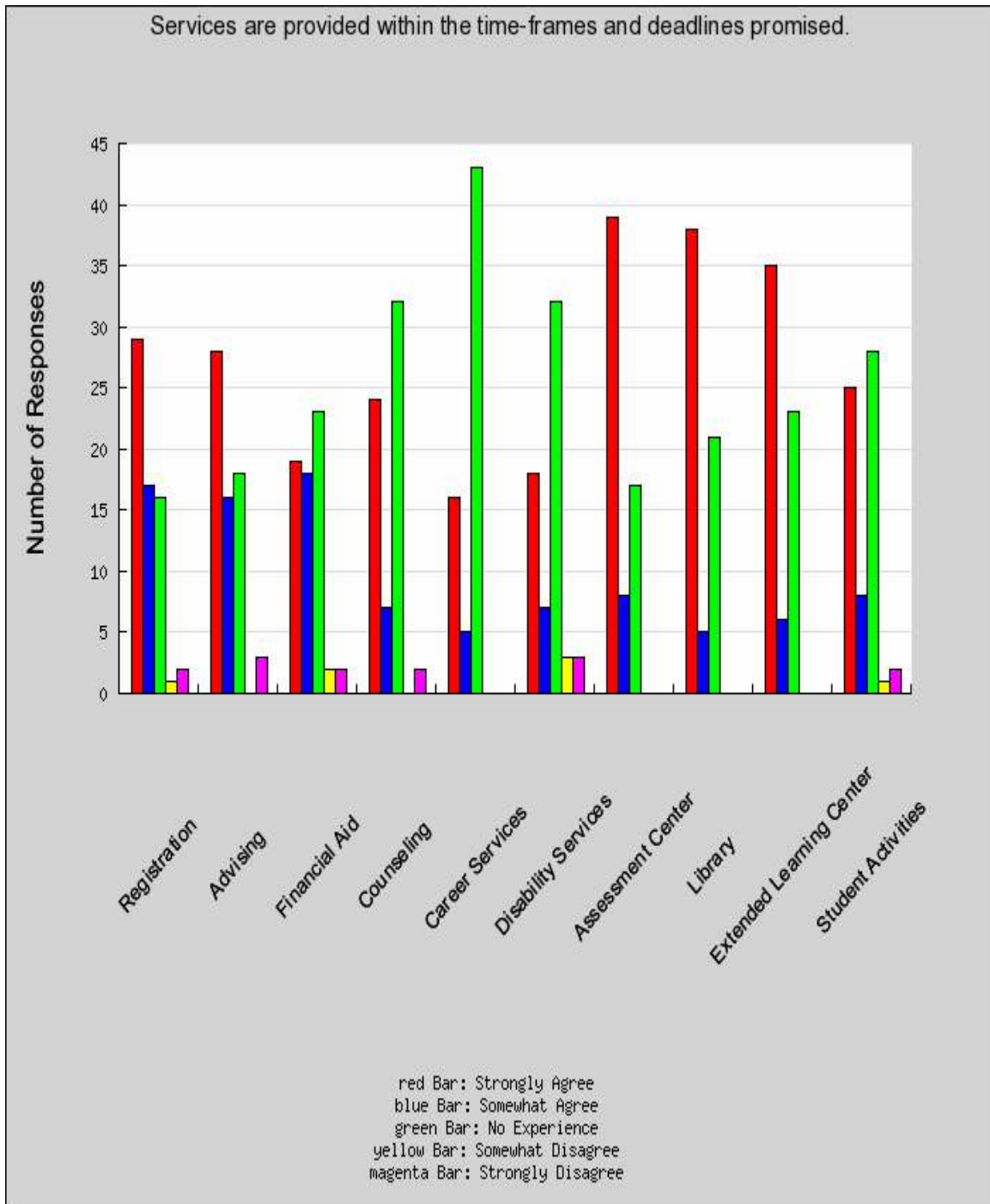


Figure 5 Services Provided in Time Frames and Deadlines Promised

Staff perceive all departments within student services to be conscientious of time-frames and deadlines as promised. Large percentages of staff are unfamiliar with specific student services, potentially due to lack of involvement in those areas.

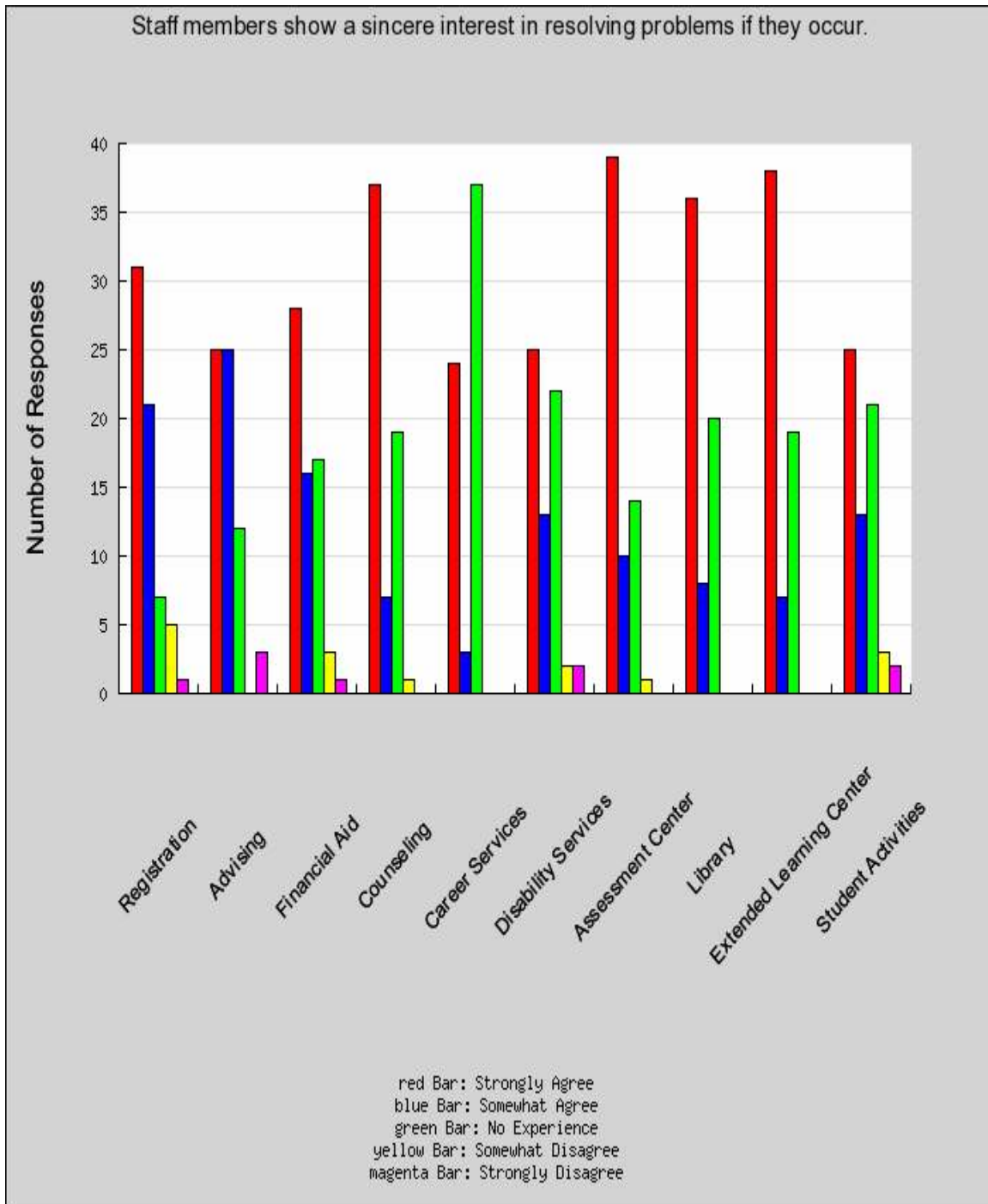


Figure 6 Staff Members Show Sincere Interest in Resolving Problems

Staff overwhelmingly perceive problem resolution as satisfying for students. Although staff may be unfamiliar with specifics in various departments, it is probable they are familiar with colleagues and how they handle problematic situations. Lower percentages of staff have no experience with these student services.

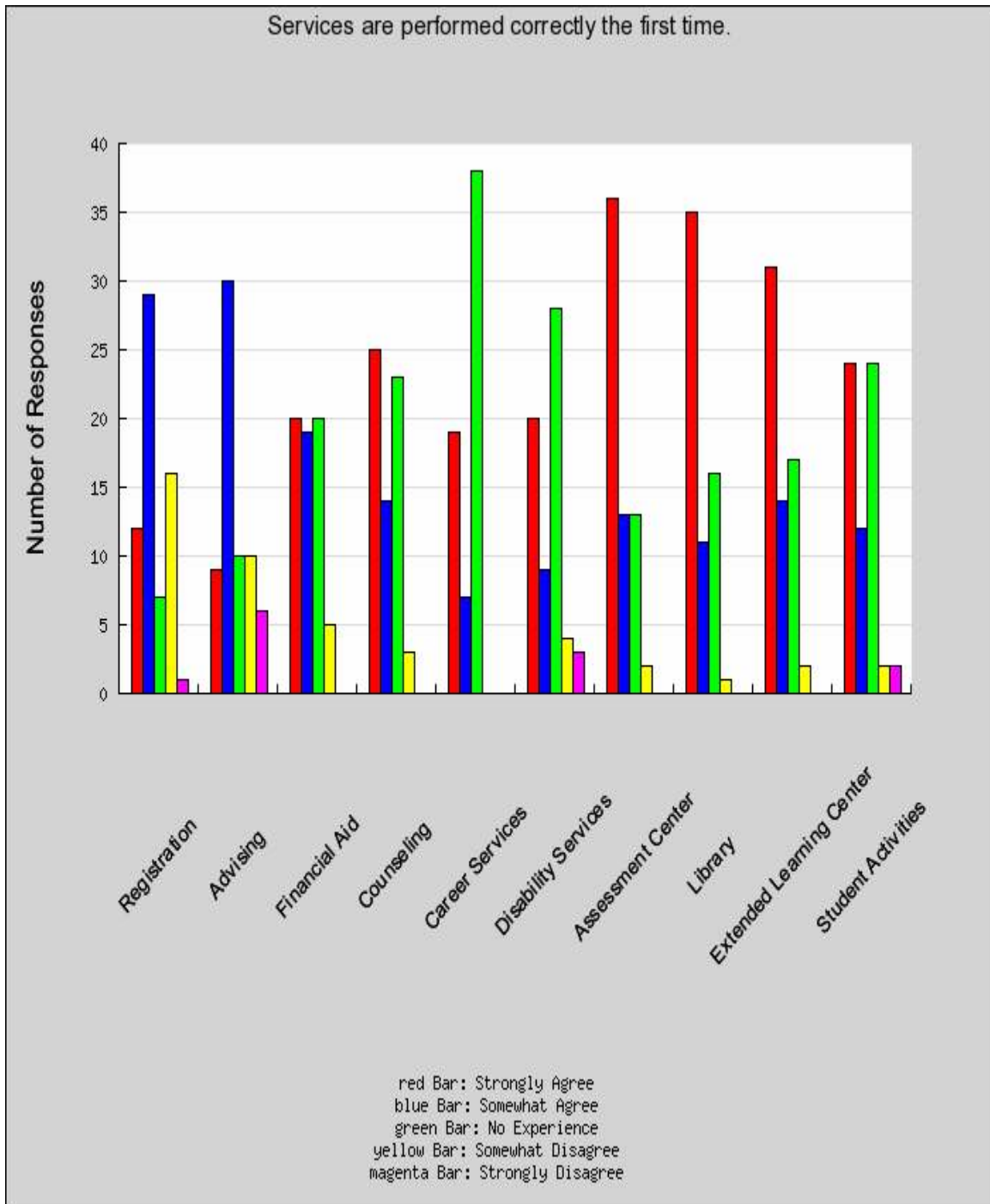


Figure 7 Services Performed Correctly the First Time

The Assessment Center, Library, and the Extended Learning Center rank among the highest services in which staff are believed to perform services correctly the first time. Registration and Advising, which are more complicated and involve multiple processes, score high (appx. 25%) in dissatisfaction.

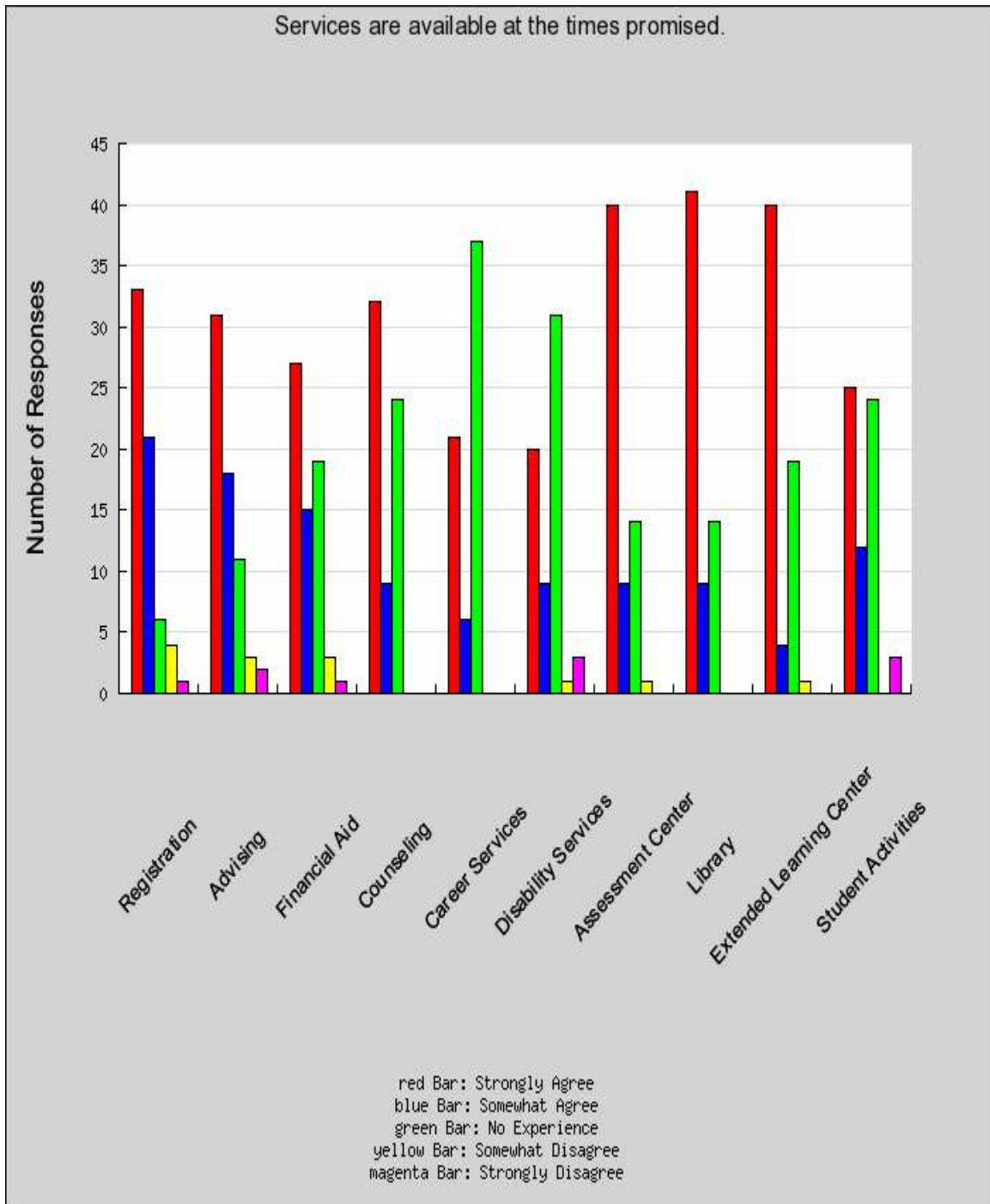


Figure 8 Services Available at Times Promised

Staff rank almost all student services at least 60% satisfactory to students. Counseling, Career Services, and the Library did not receive any unsatisfactory votes. Other areas, such as Registration and Advising could be due to technological malfunctions that impede service availability.



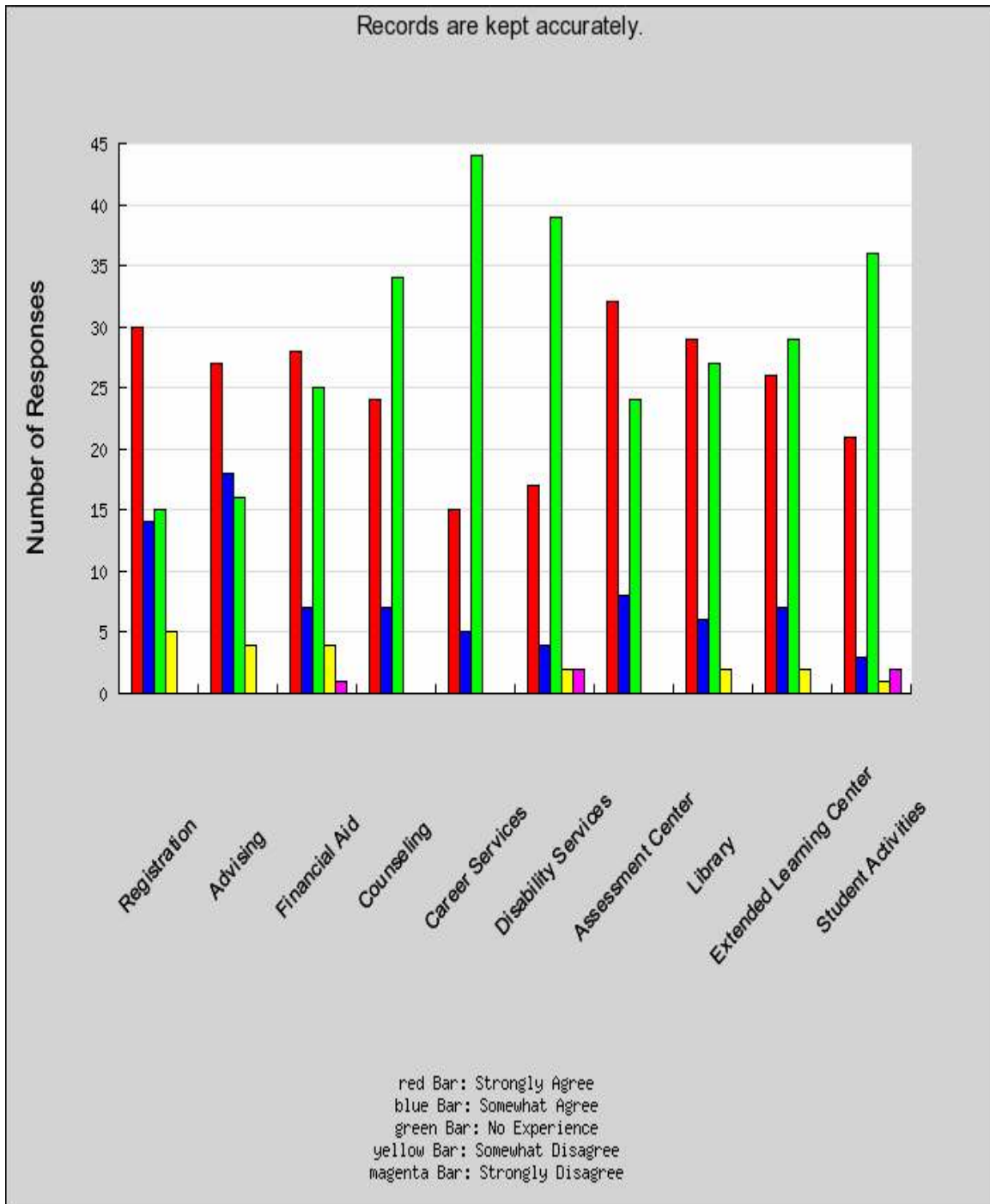


Figure 9 Records Kept Accurately

Staff unfamiliarity with record-keeping in various departments may explain the large percentage of “No Experience” responses. Otherwise, staff perceive record-keeping to be satisfactorily accurate (more than 50%) in most areas.

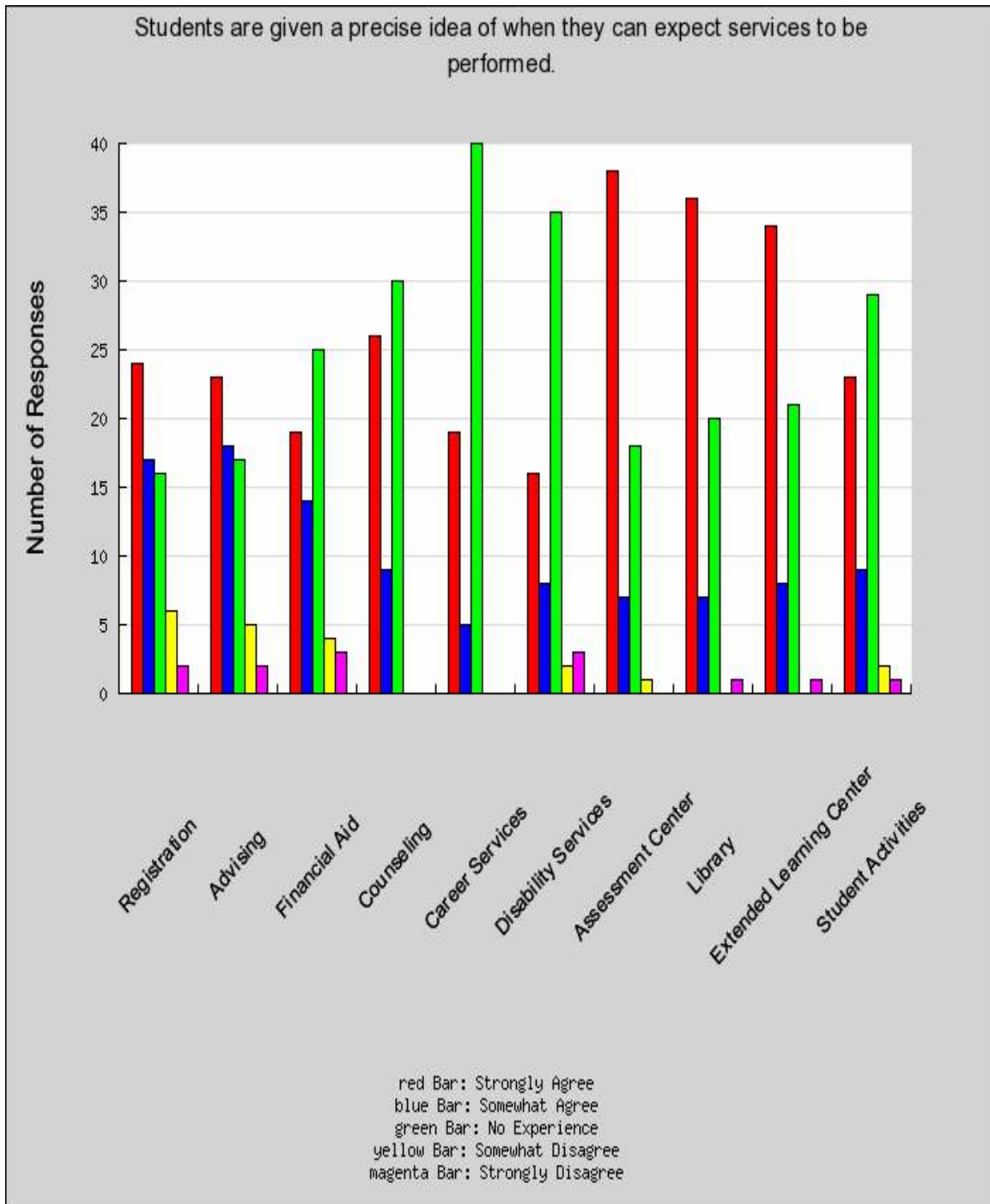


Figure 10 Students Given Precise Idea of Expected Service Time

Staff ranked perceived dissatisfaction in Registration, Advising, and Financial Aid at approximately 10% each. Other areas experienced little, if any, unsatisfactory votes related to students receiving a precise idea of when services will be rendered.

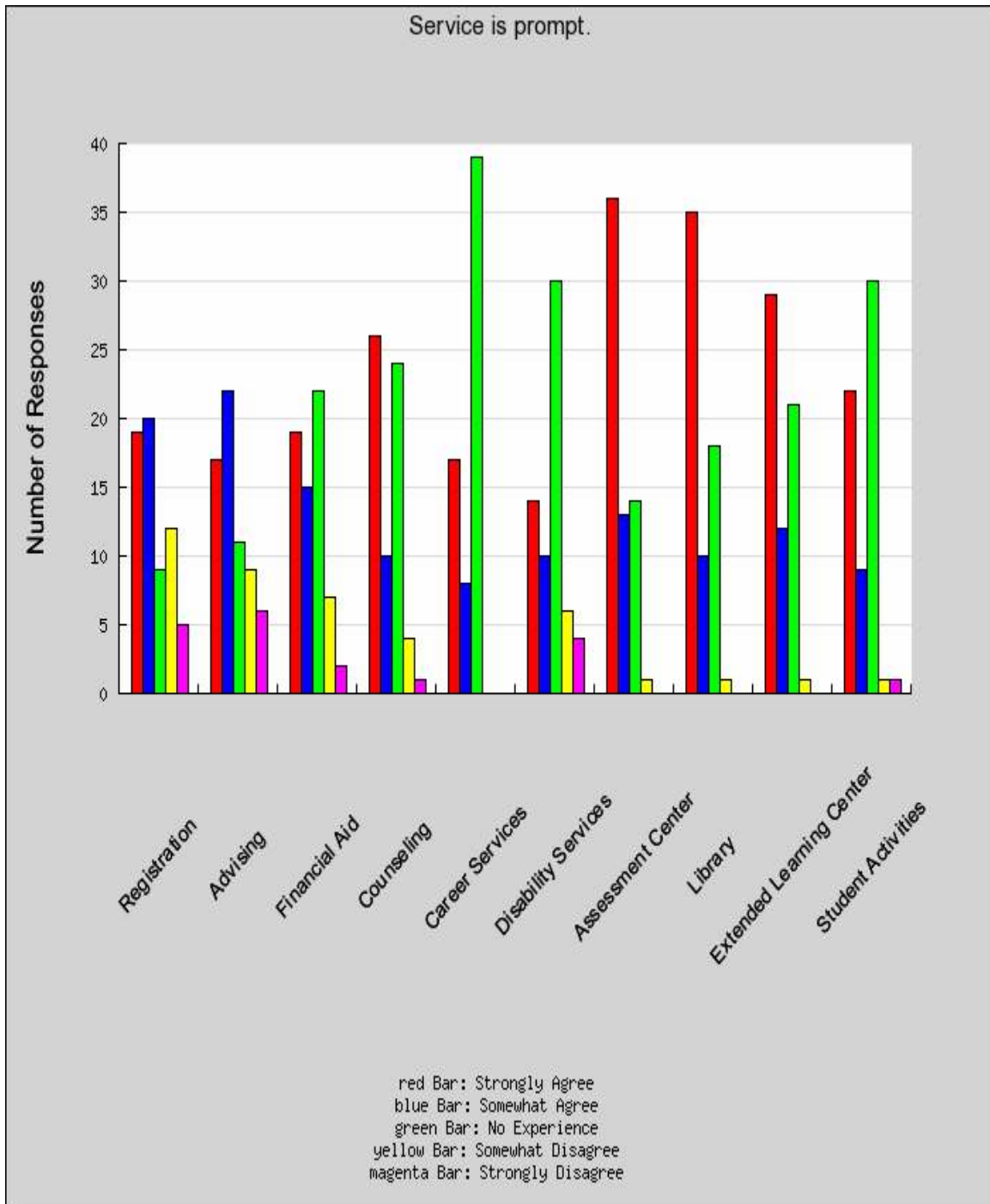


Figure 11 Service is Prompt

Staff perceive Registration, Advising, and Disability Services to be significantly unsatisfactory to students in terms of promptness, even though student satisfaction is higher. Either staff are too critical or students value quality over promptness.

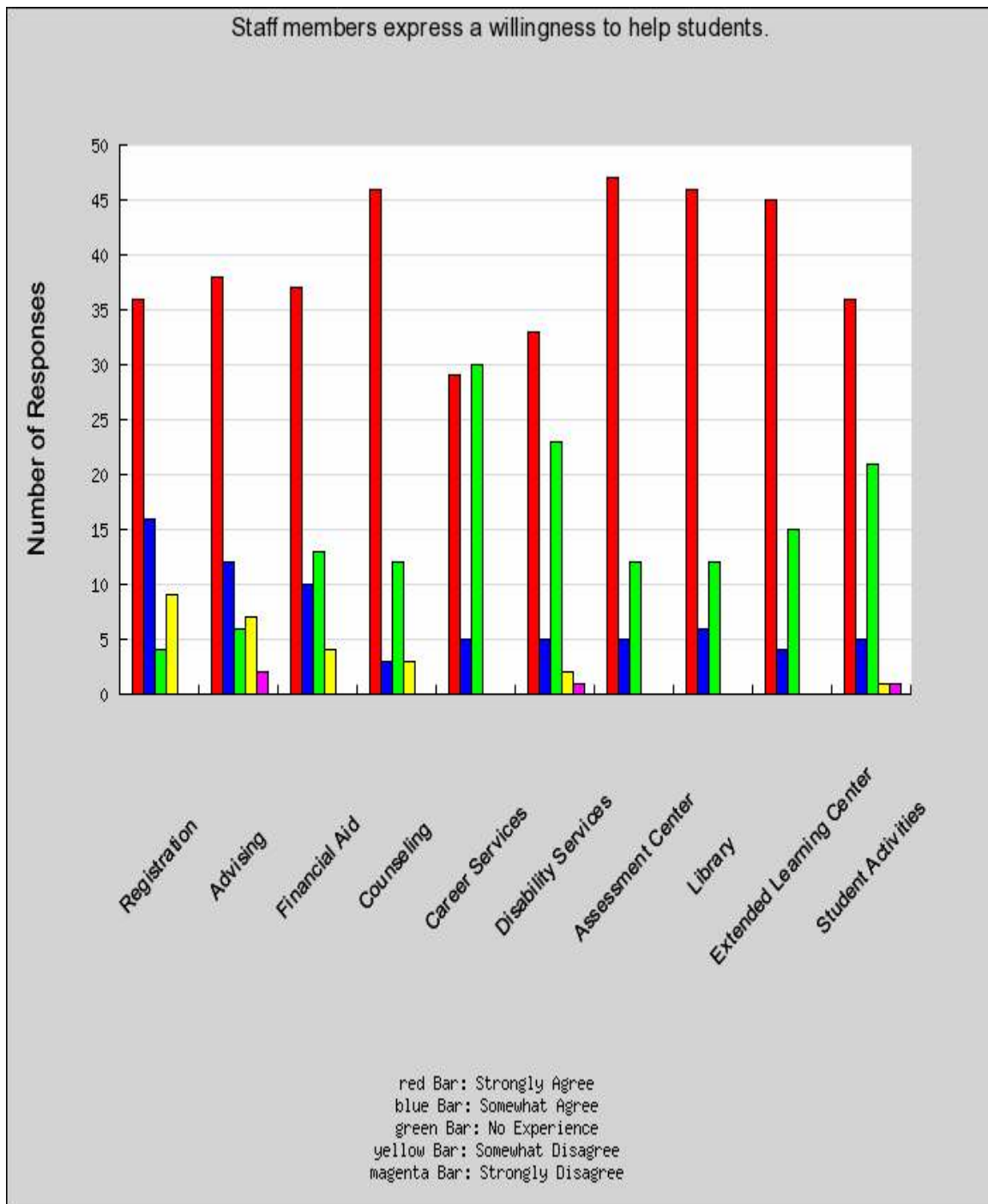


Figure 12 Staff Members Express a Willingness to Help

Overall, staff believe colleagues express a willingness to help. In fact, the Assessment Center, Library, and Extended Learning Center score significantly positive marks according to Independent Sample T-tests.

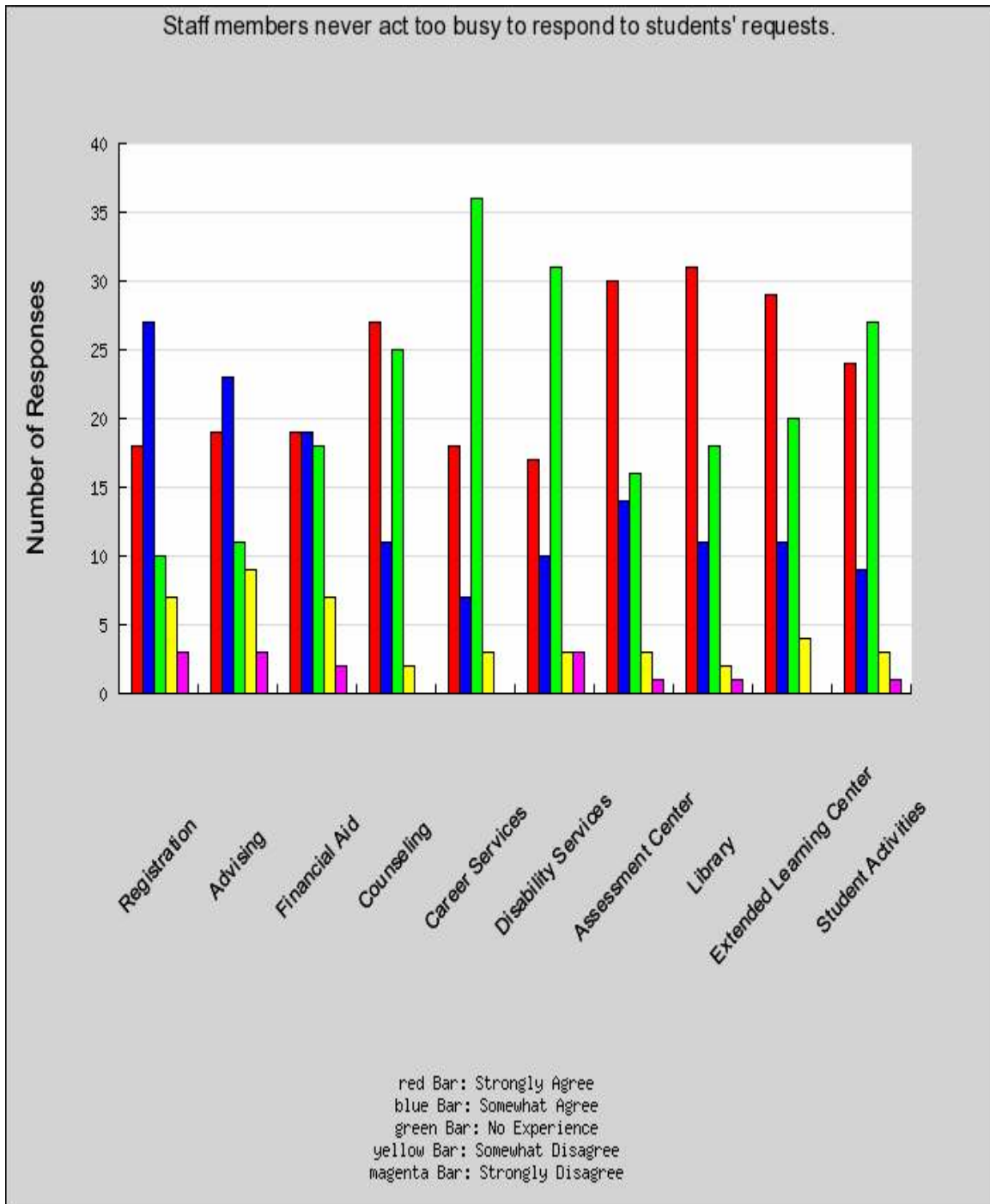


Figure 13 Staff Members Never Act Too Busy to Respond

In general, staff perceive that colleagues make time for students. Staff disagree in areas where students arrive en masse and face deadlines: Registration, Advising, and Financial Aid. They realize these employees assist all new and returning students, translating to them being busy.

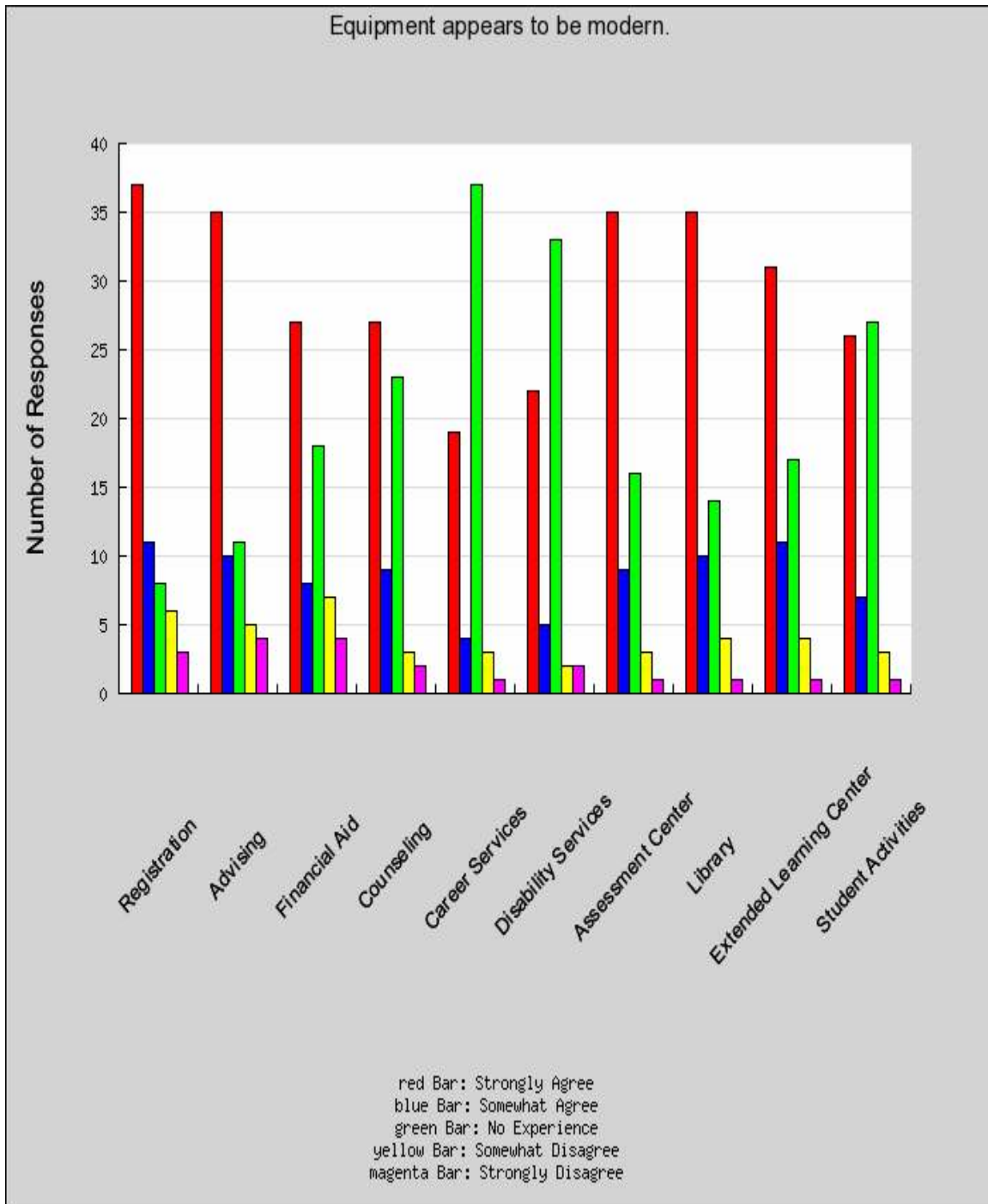


Figure 14 Equipment Appears to be Modern

Staff perceive overall satisfaction related to equipment, but there are definitely some who disagree in each area. Oddly enough, the Library, Extended Learning Center, and the Assessment Center are equipped with the latest technology because the building is only two years old.

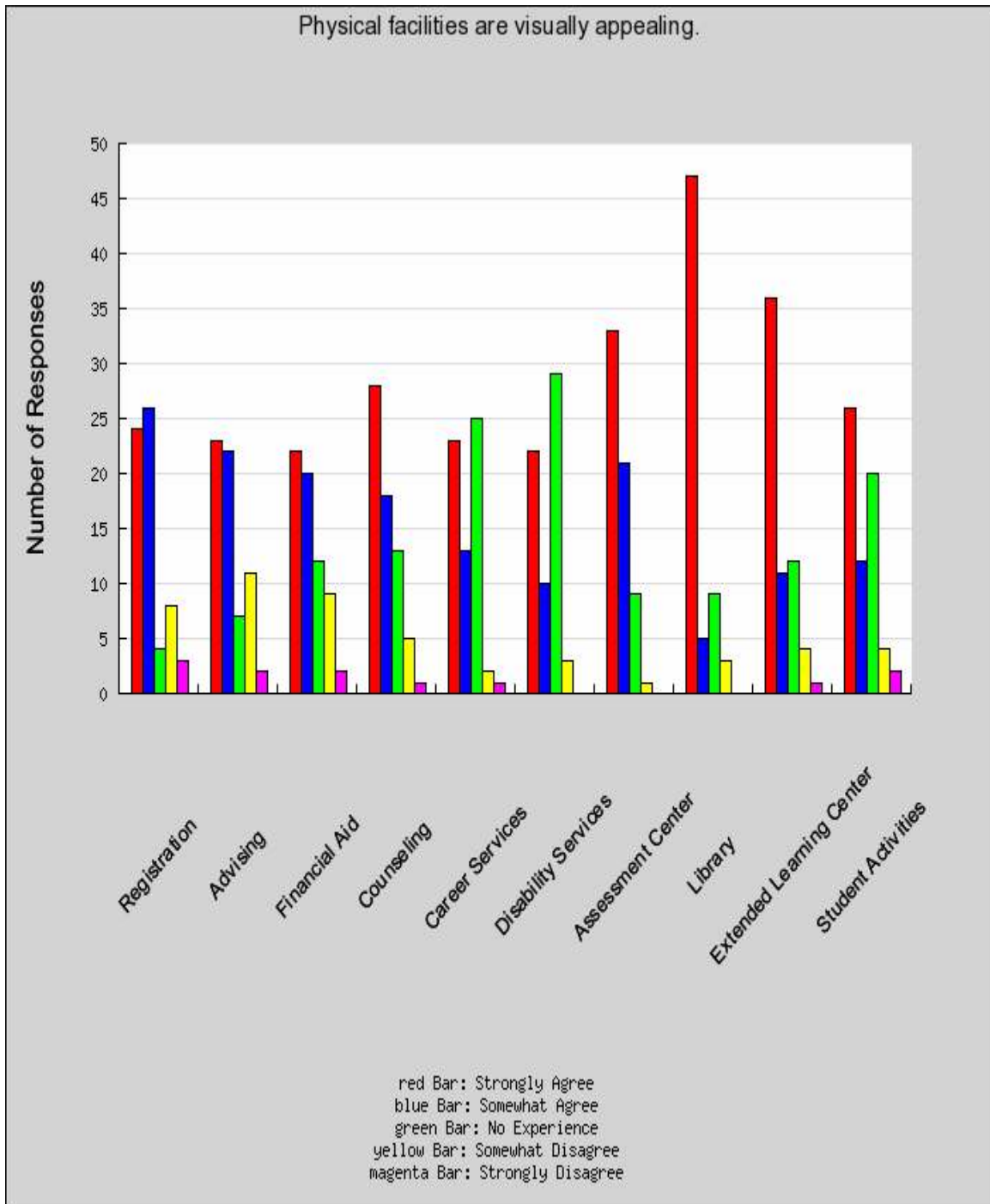


Figure 15 Physical Facilities are Visually Appealing

It is no surprise that the Library, Extended Learning Center, and Assessment Center receive a high satisfaction perception rating, as the building is only two years old. Registration, Advising, and Financial Aid all receive some unsatisfactory votes, probably due to the crowded space and lack of confidentiality that will be discussed later.

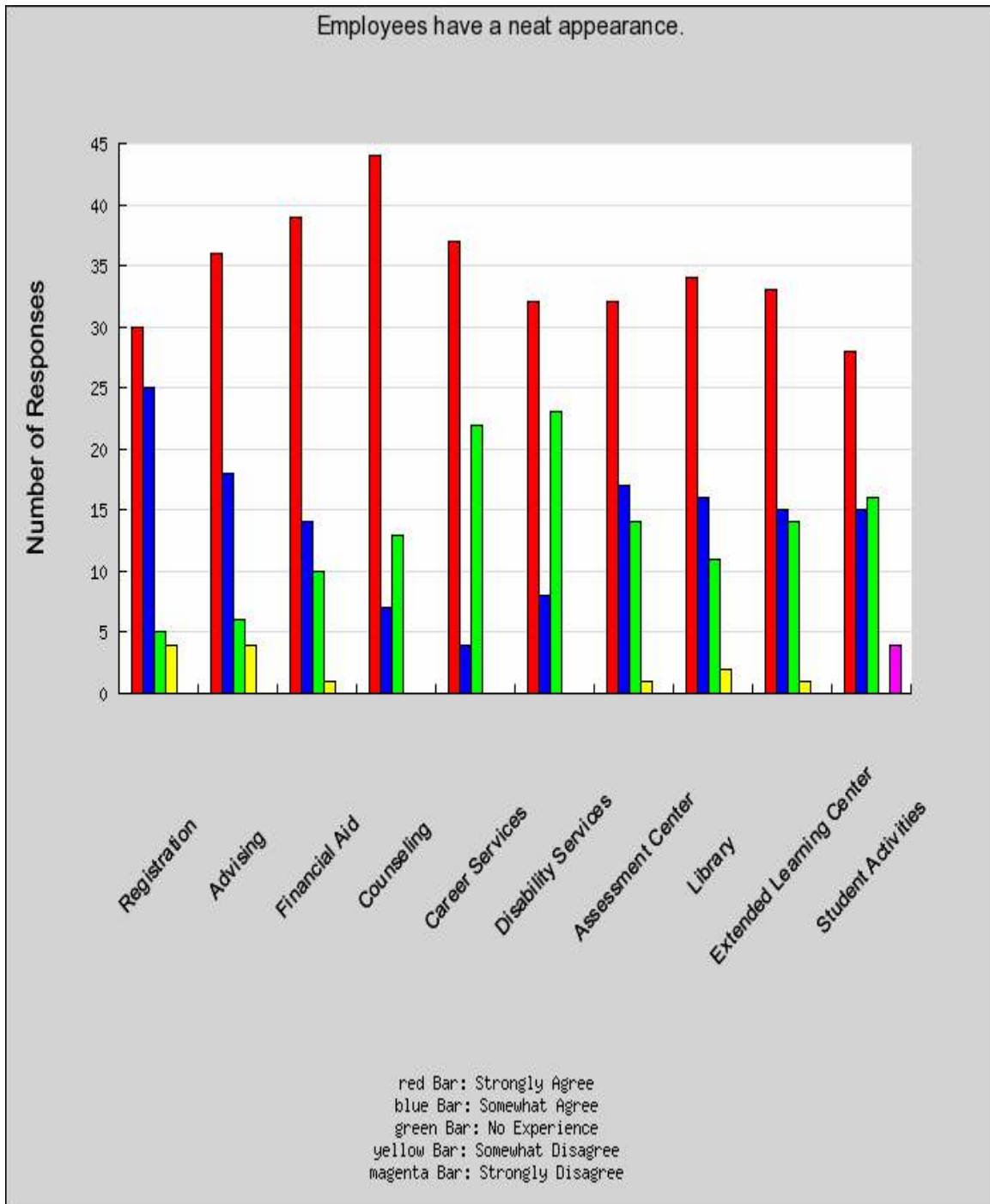


Figure 16 Employees Have a Neat Appearance

Staff perceive most employees to have a neat appearance. Tomball does employ a large number of student workers, who may dress more casually.



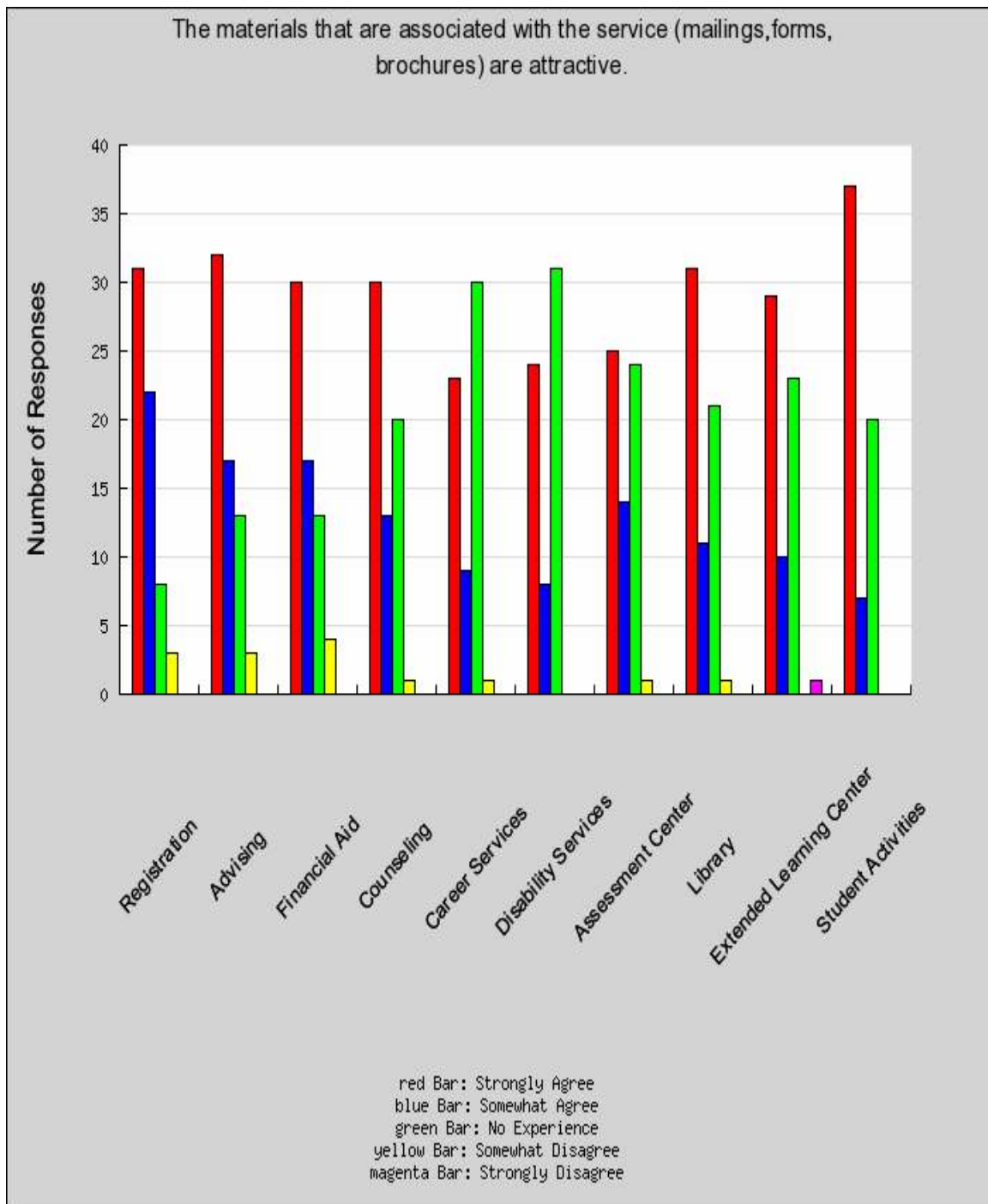


Figure 17 Materials Associated with Service are Attractive

Perception of departmental materials is quite satisfactory. Materials related to Career Services and Disability Services were not known to approximately 50% of the staff respondents.

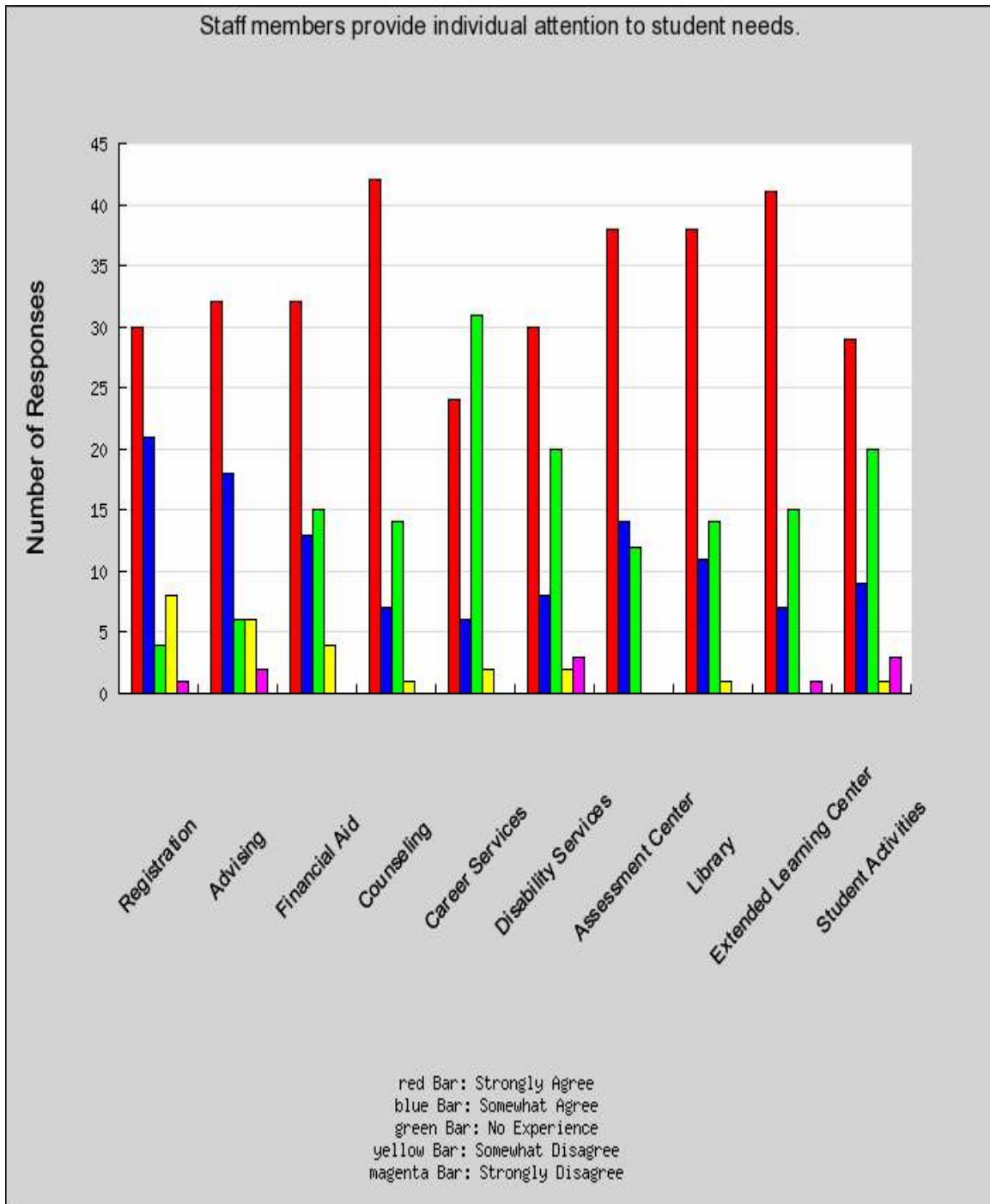


Figure 18 Staff Members Provide Individual Attention to Student Needs

Staff believe that colleagues provide individual attention to student needs. There is some disagreement in Registration and Advising.

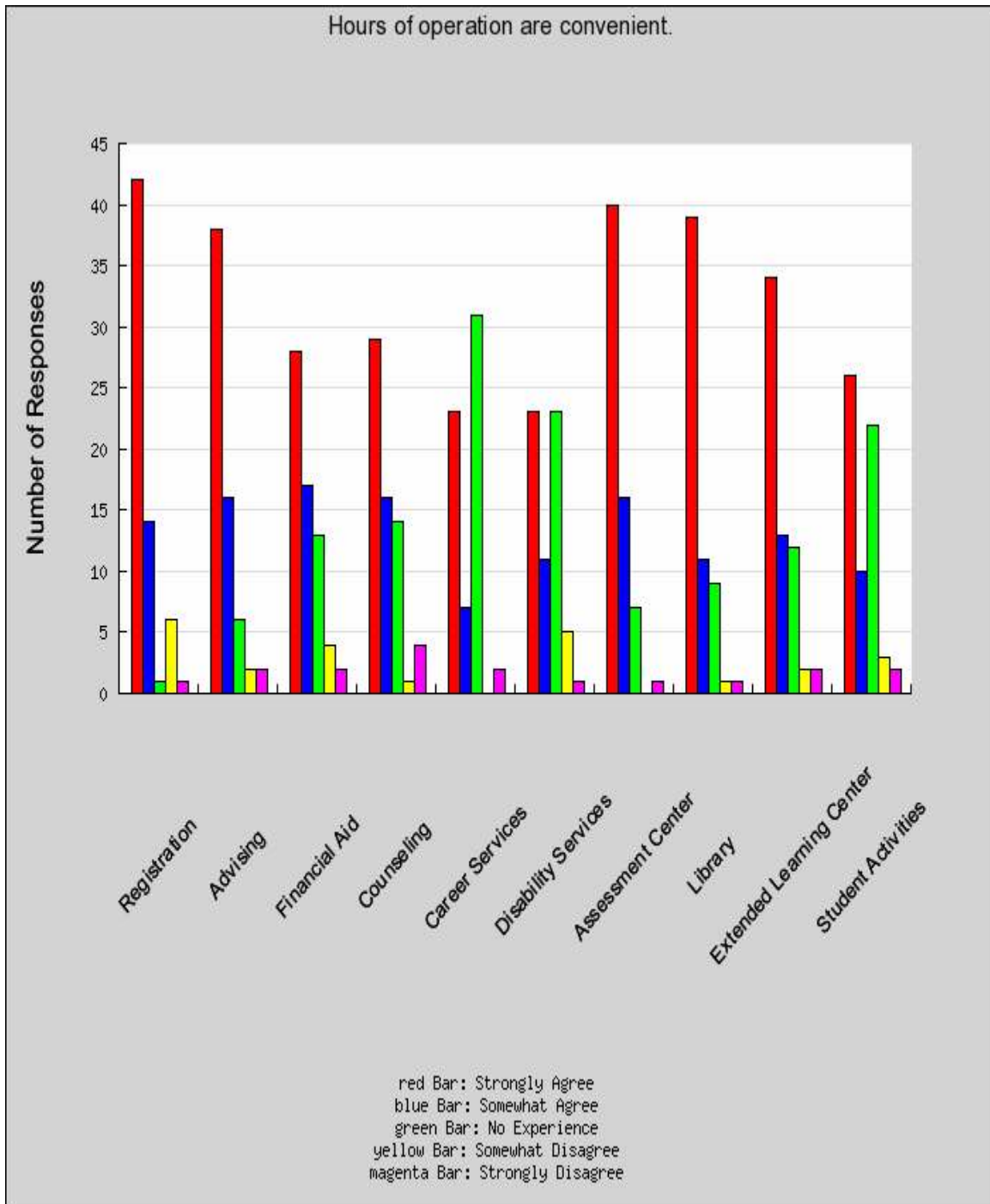


Figure 19 Hours of Operation are Convenient

In general staff believe the hours of operation for student services more than adequate.

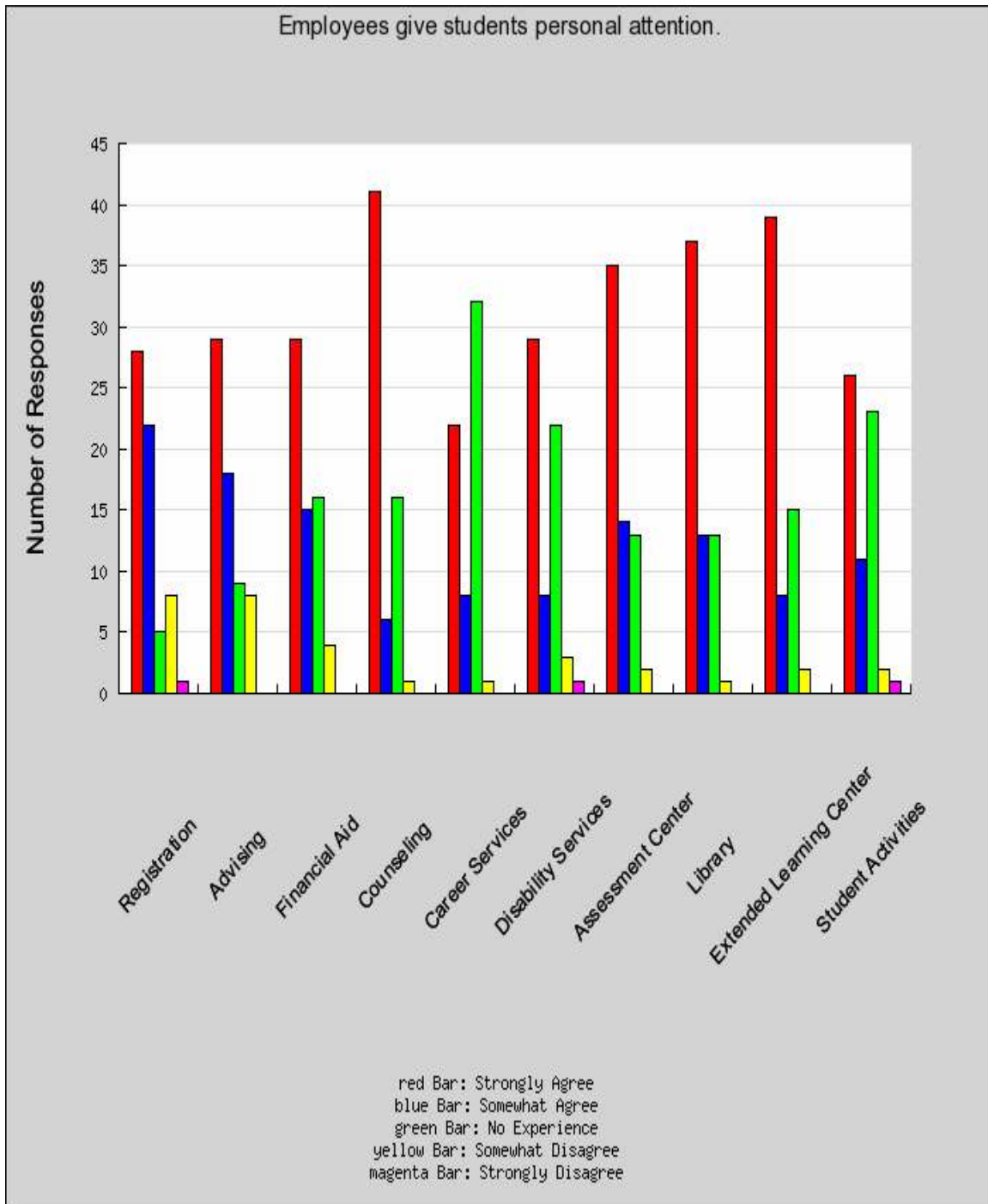


Figure 20 Employees Give Students Personal Attention

Staff perceive most areas of student services give students personal attention. It is difficult to understand disagreement in Registration and Advising because students are seen on a one-on-one basis.

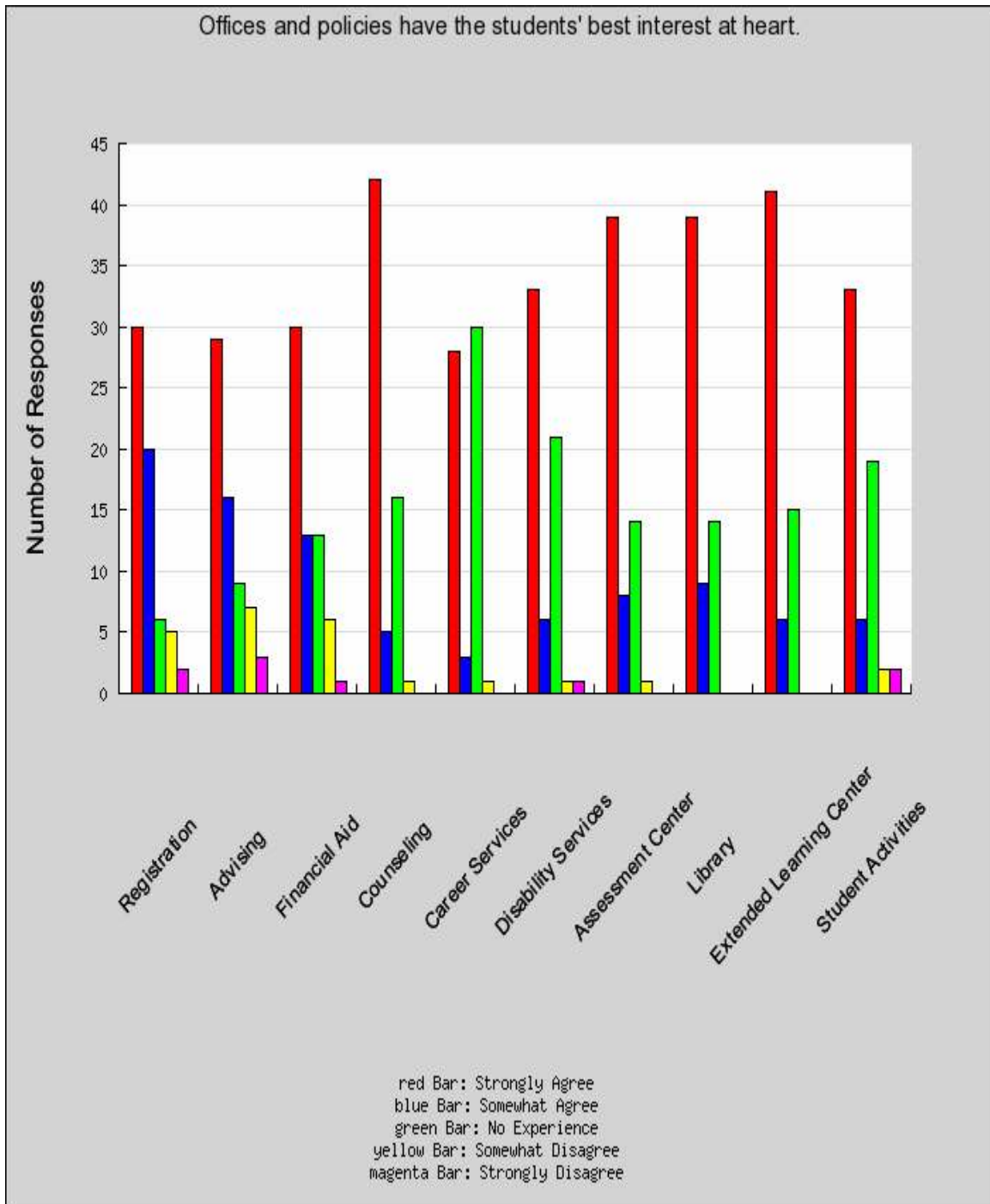


Figure 21 Offices and Policies Have Students' Best Interest at Heart

Staff perceive most offices in student services have the student's best interest at heart. A handful of dissenters appear in Registration, Advising, and Financial Aid.

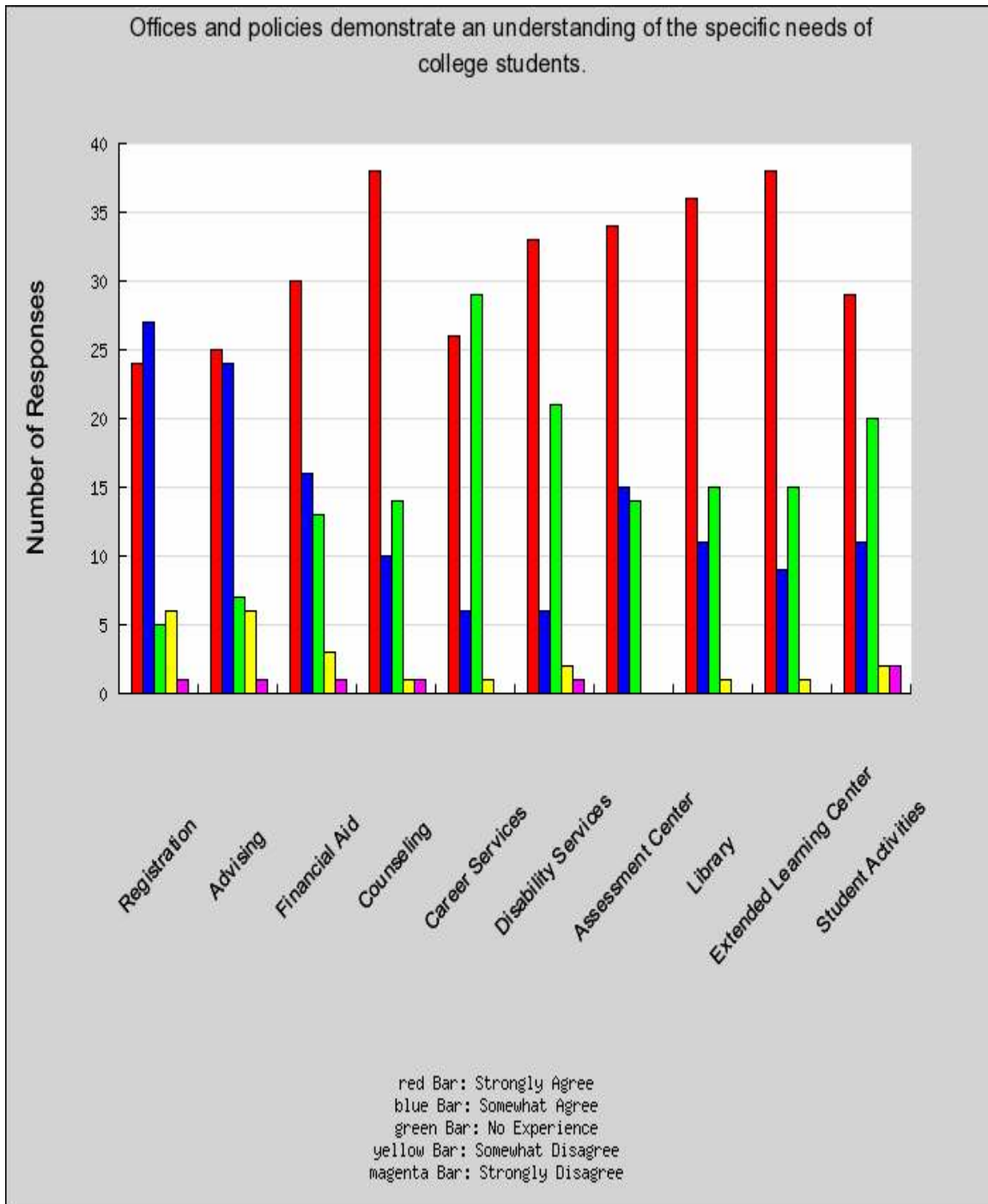


Figure 22 Offices and Policies Demonstrate Understanding of Student Needs

Staff believe that most offices and policies demonstrate an understanding of college students' needs. Perhaps staff disagree with Advising due to Prescriptive Advising versus Developmental Advising practices, which will be discussed in the staff focus group.

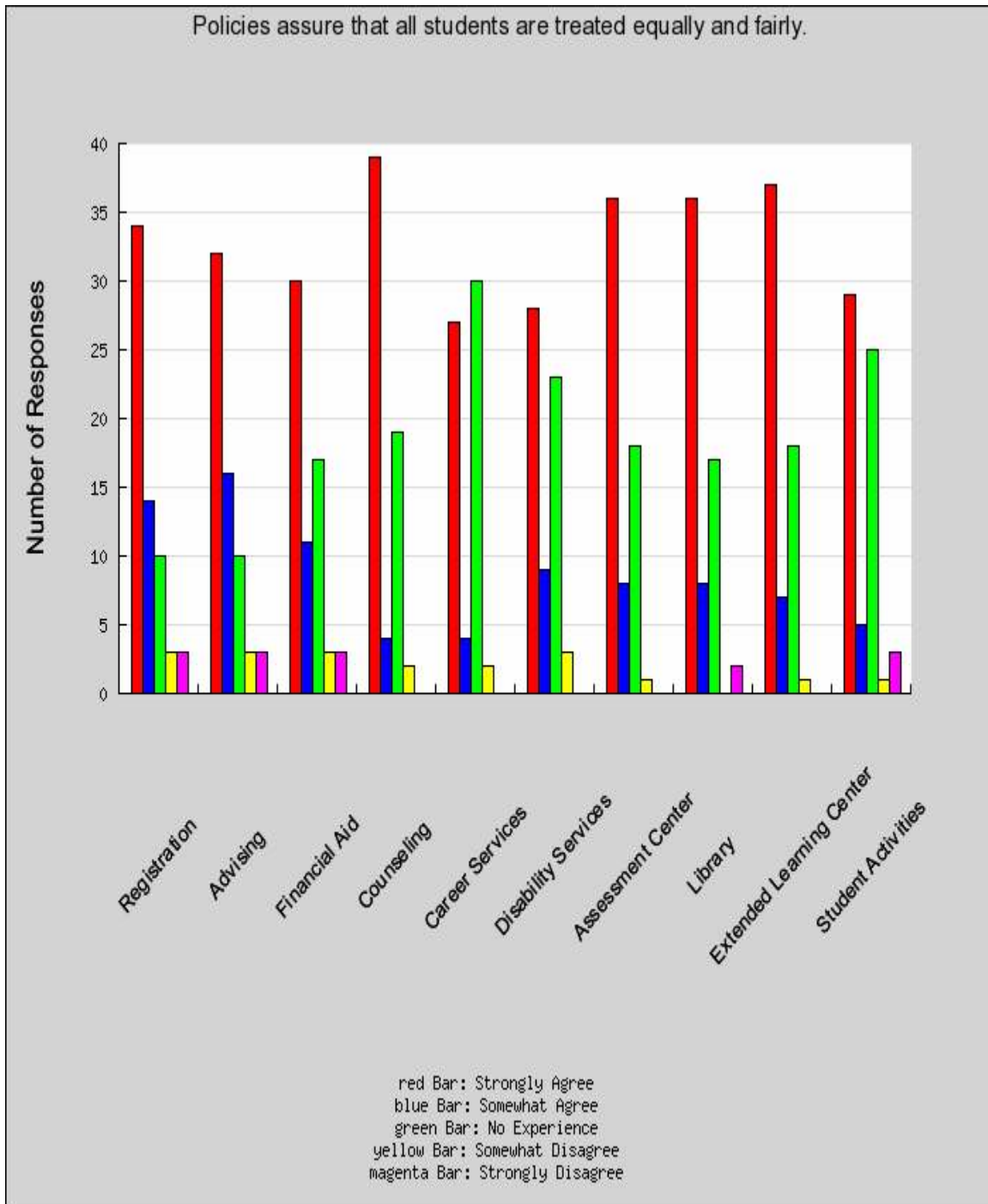


Figure 23 Policies Assure All Students are Treated Equally and Fairly

Staff perceive that all offices and policies treat students equally a majority of the time. Six respondents disagree in the areas of Registration, Advising, and Financial Aid.

## **STUDENT FIGURES BY QUESTION**

Following are charts representing the 23 main questions and results from the electronic survey. Students rated each student services area based on their satisfaction. Responses in each of the 10 student services areas are divided into “strongly agree,” “somewhat agree,” “no experience,” “somewhat disagree,” and “strongly disagree.”



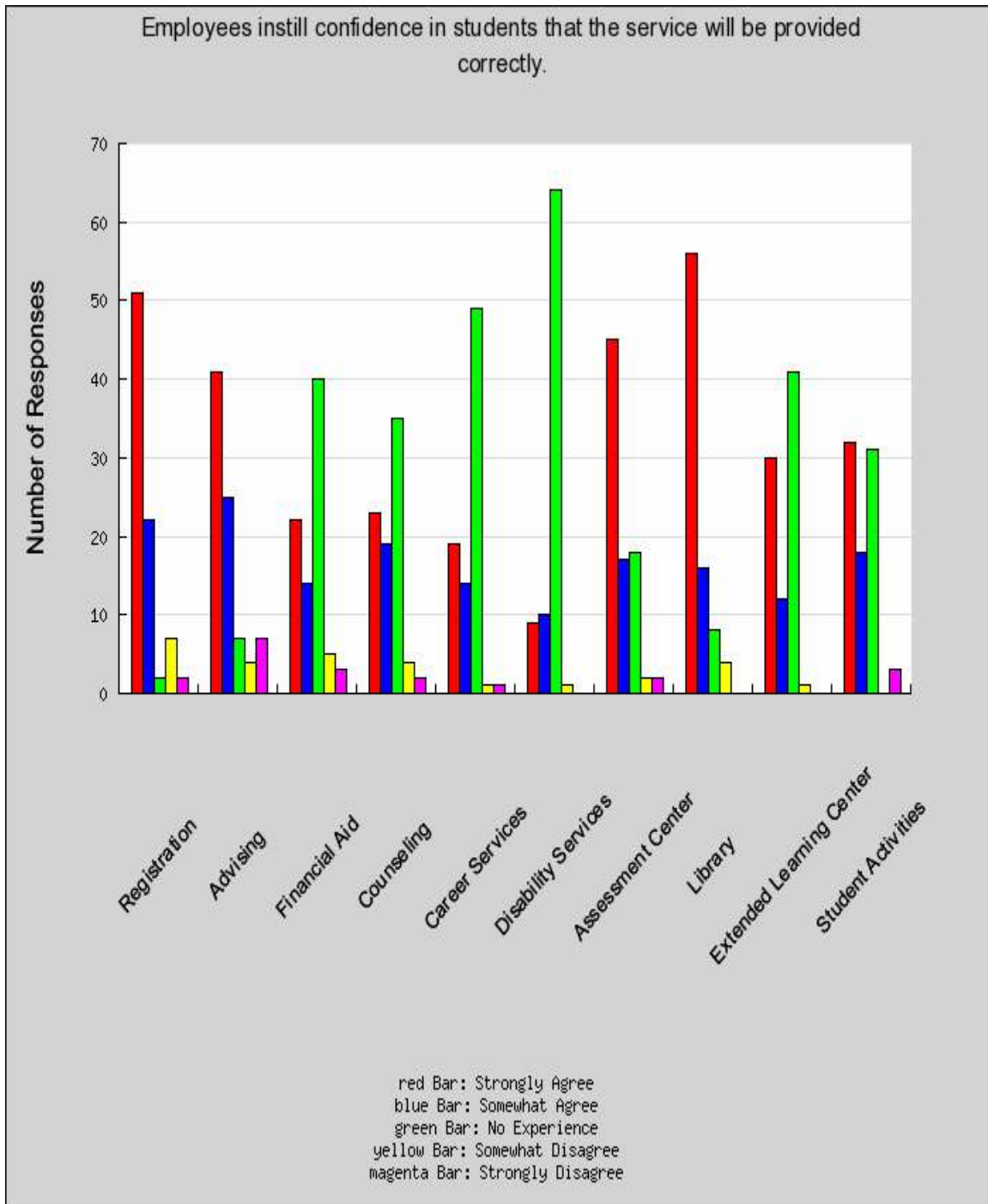


Figure 24 Employees Instill Confidence Service will be Provided Correctly

Overall, employees instill confidence in students when providing a student service. What stands out is the fact that high percentages (41% - 58%) of students are unfamiliar with at least four areas. Unfamiliarity with Disability Services (76%) is not surprising.

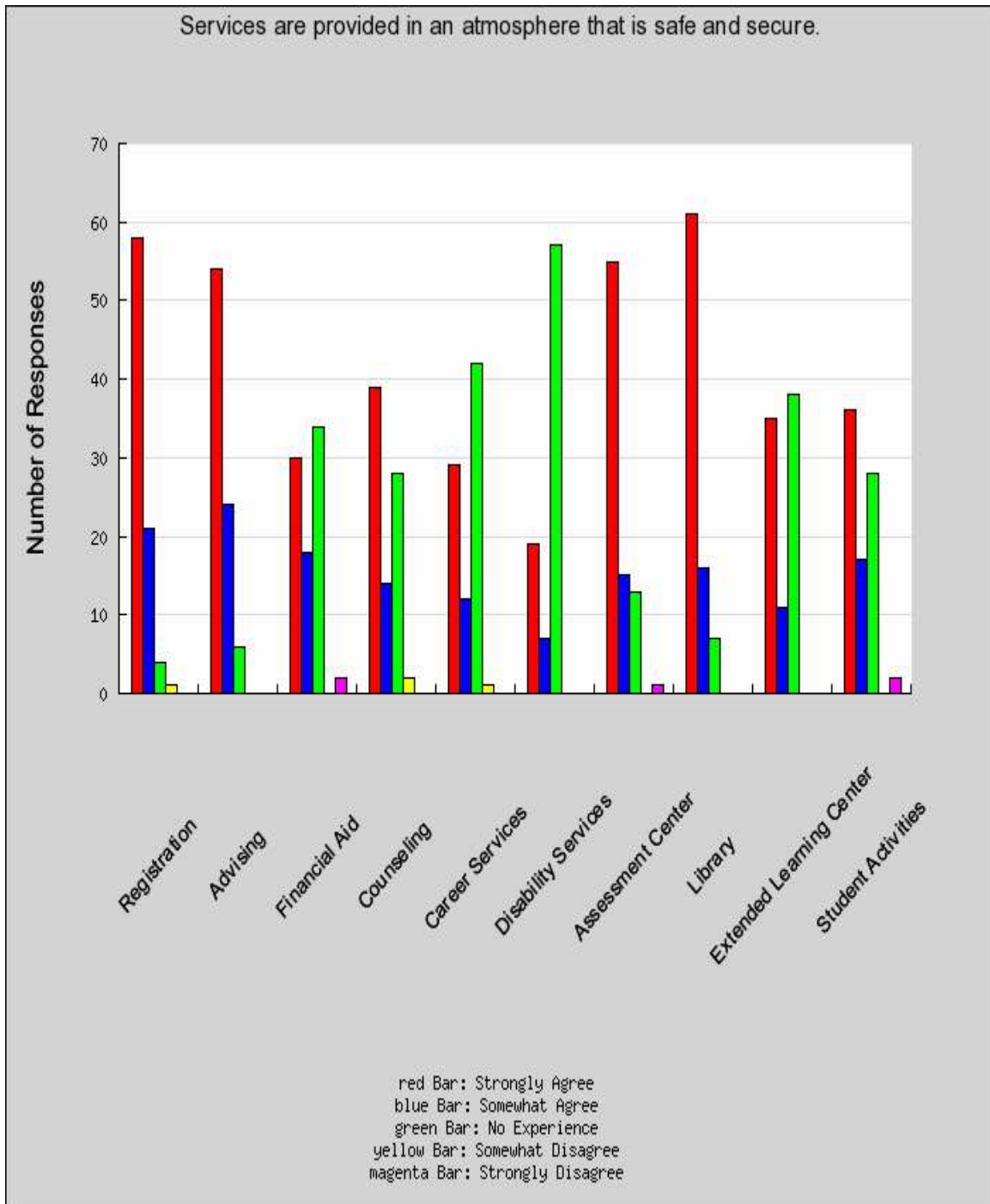


Figure 25 Services are Provided in an Atmosphere that is Safe and Secure

Students feel safe and secure in student services area of Tomball College.

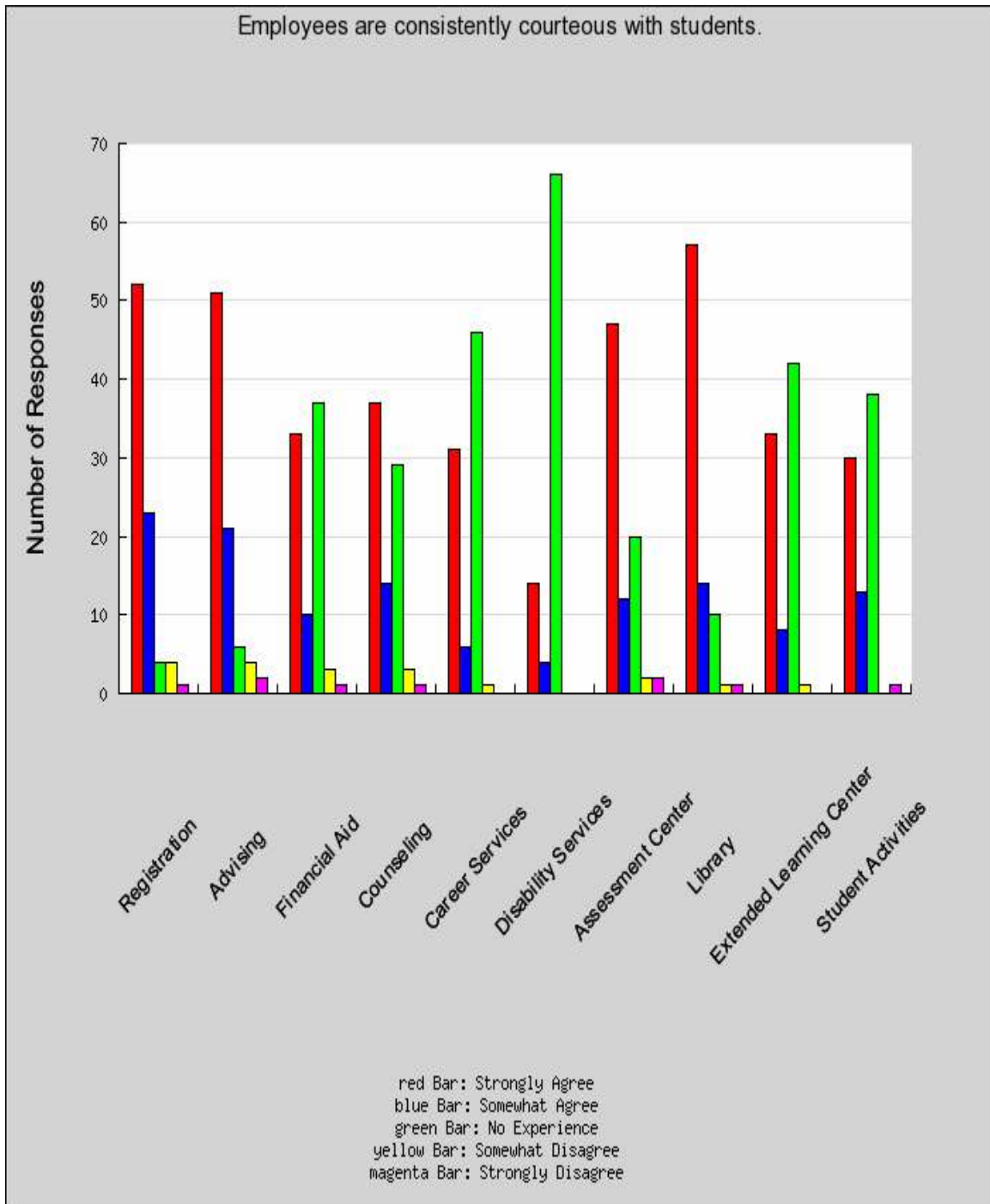


Figure 26 Employees are Consistently Courteous with Students

Students are satisfied with courtesy extended by employees in student services. High percentages of students are inexperienced in at least five areas.

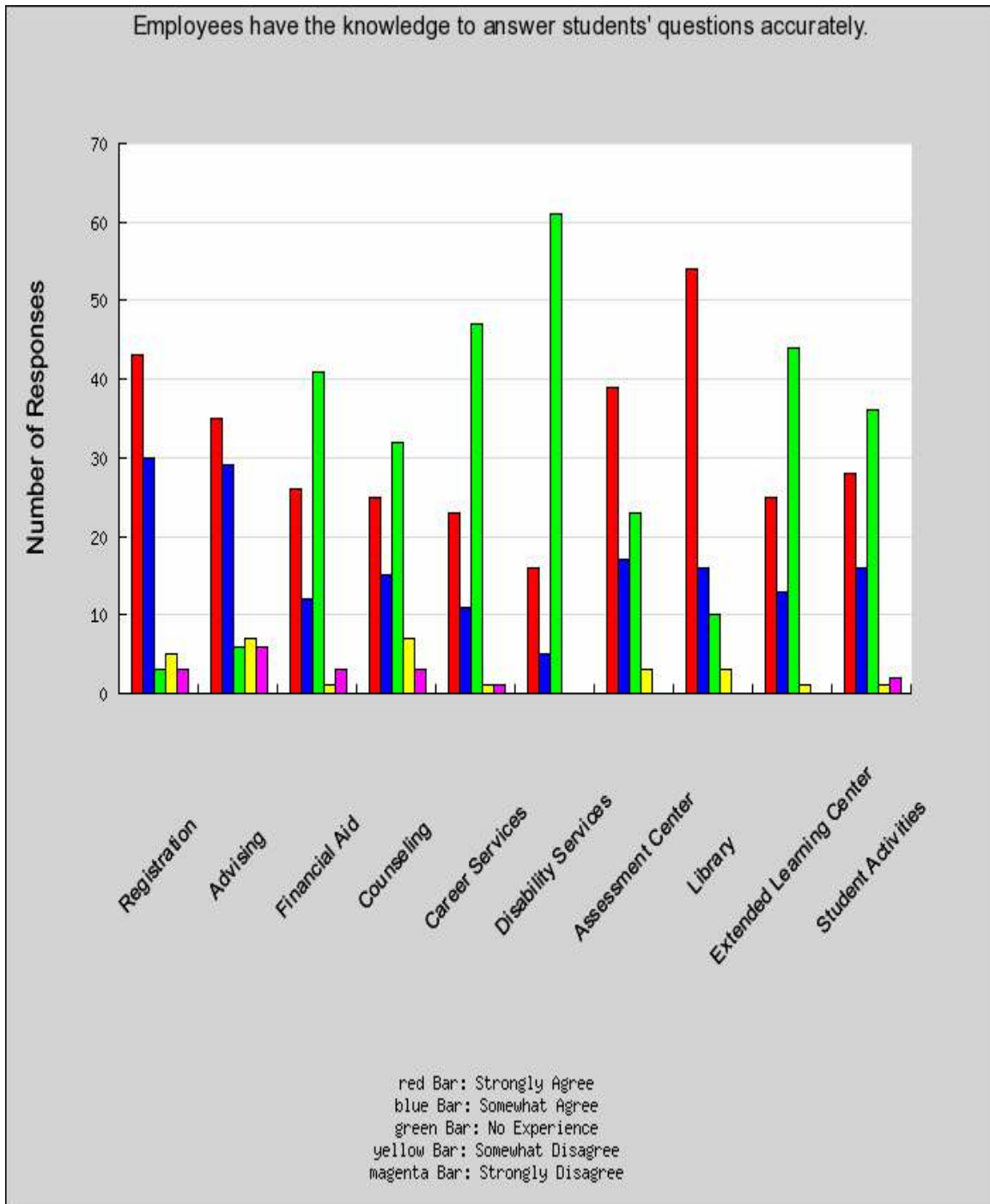


Figure 27 Employees Have Knowledge to Answer Students' Questions Accurately

Students who take advantage of most student services are satisfied that employees are knowledgeable. Although staff perceive Registration and Advising to be dissatisfying for students, students appear to be satisfied.

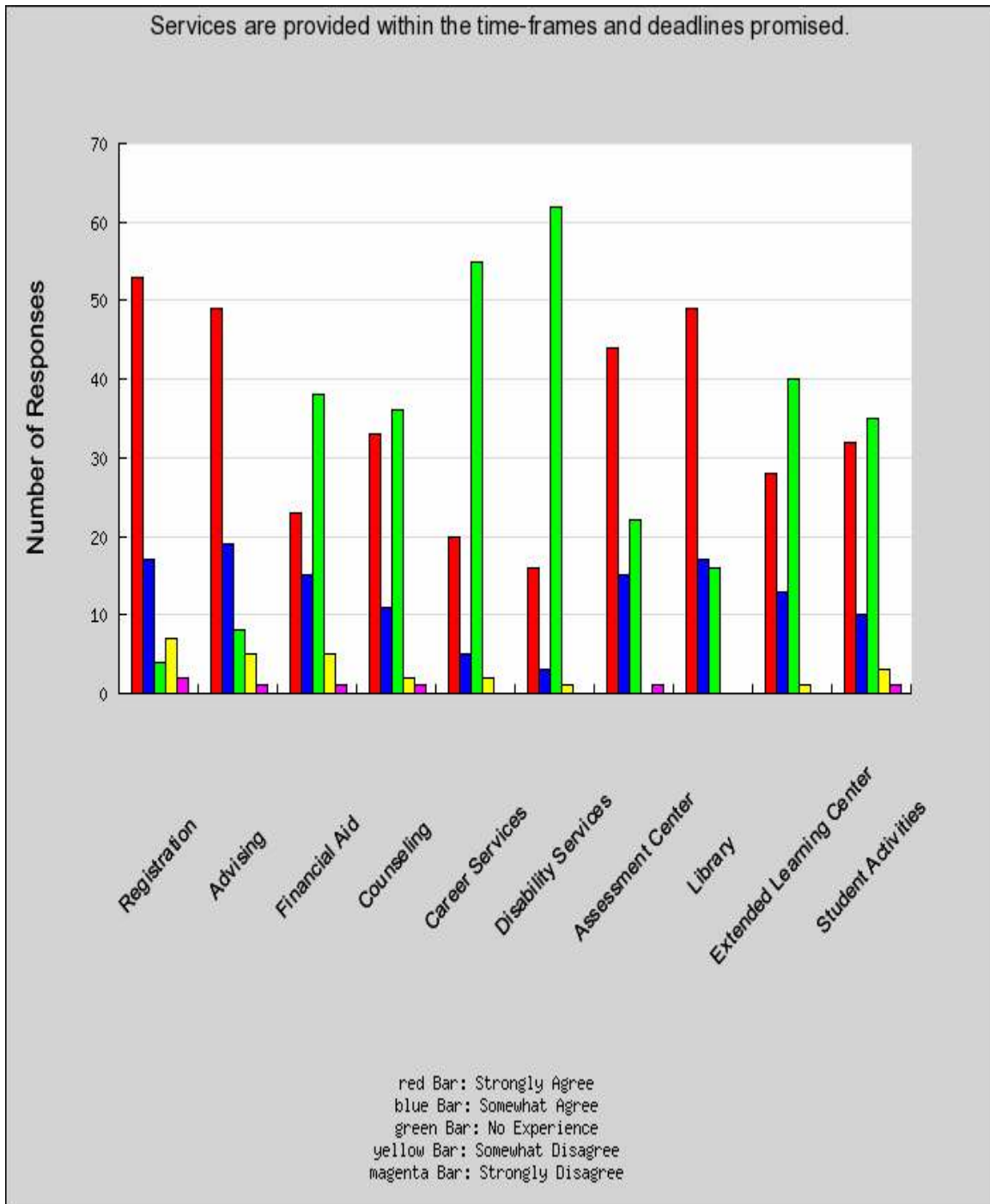


Figure 28 Services Provided Within Time Frames and Deadlines Promised

When students are experienced with departments within the division, they are satisfied with the availability of services.

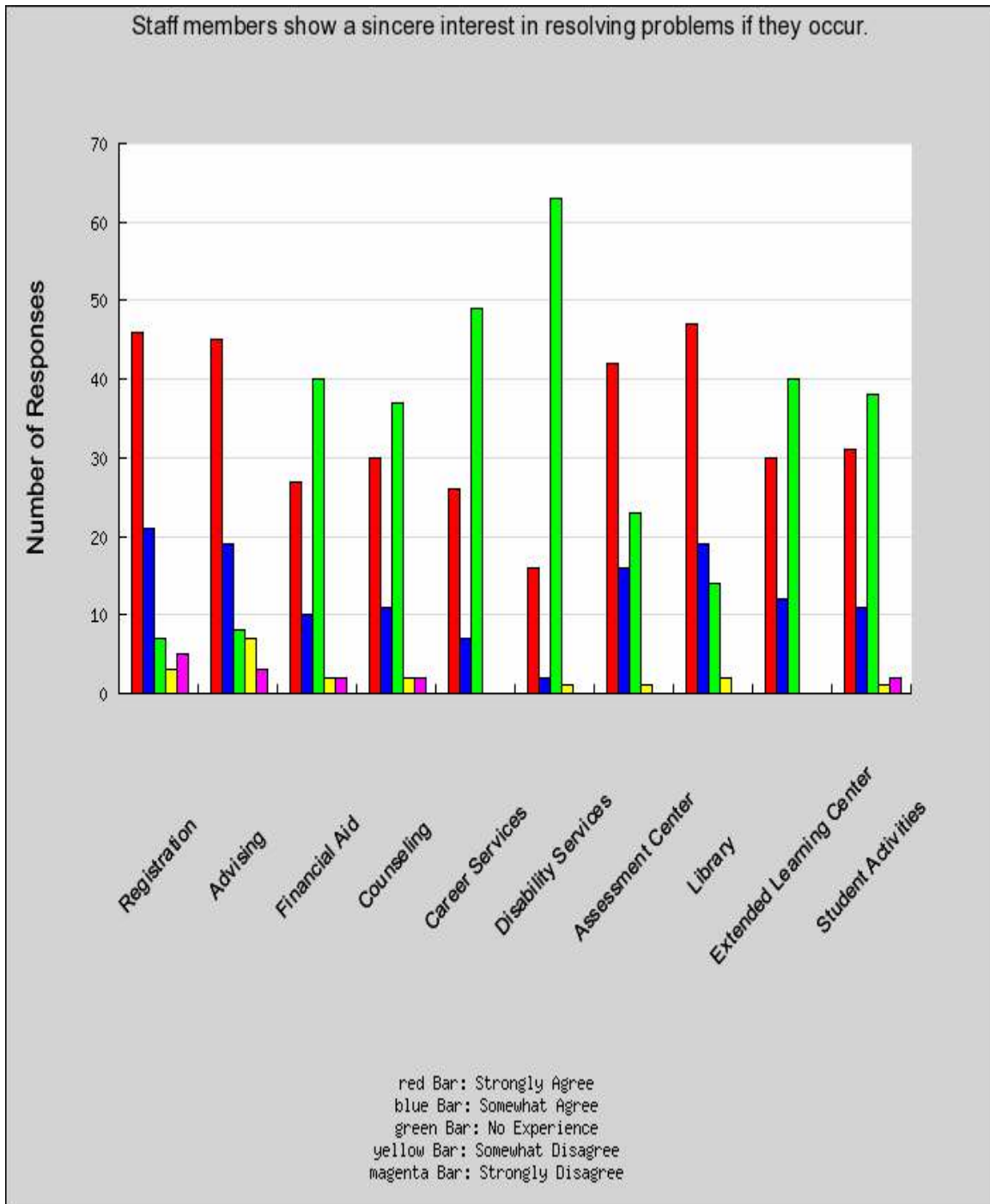


Figure 29 Staff Members Show Sincere Interest in Resolving Problems

Students agree that staff show a sincere interest in resolving problems if they occur. Some problems in Registration and Advising involve class schedules and course programs, which may be more difficult to resolve, causing dissatisfaction for the student.

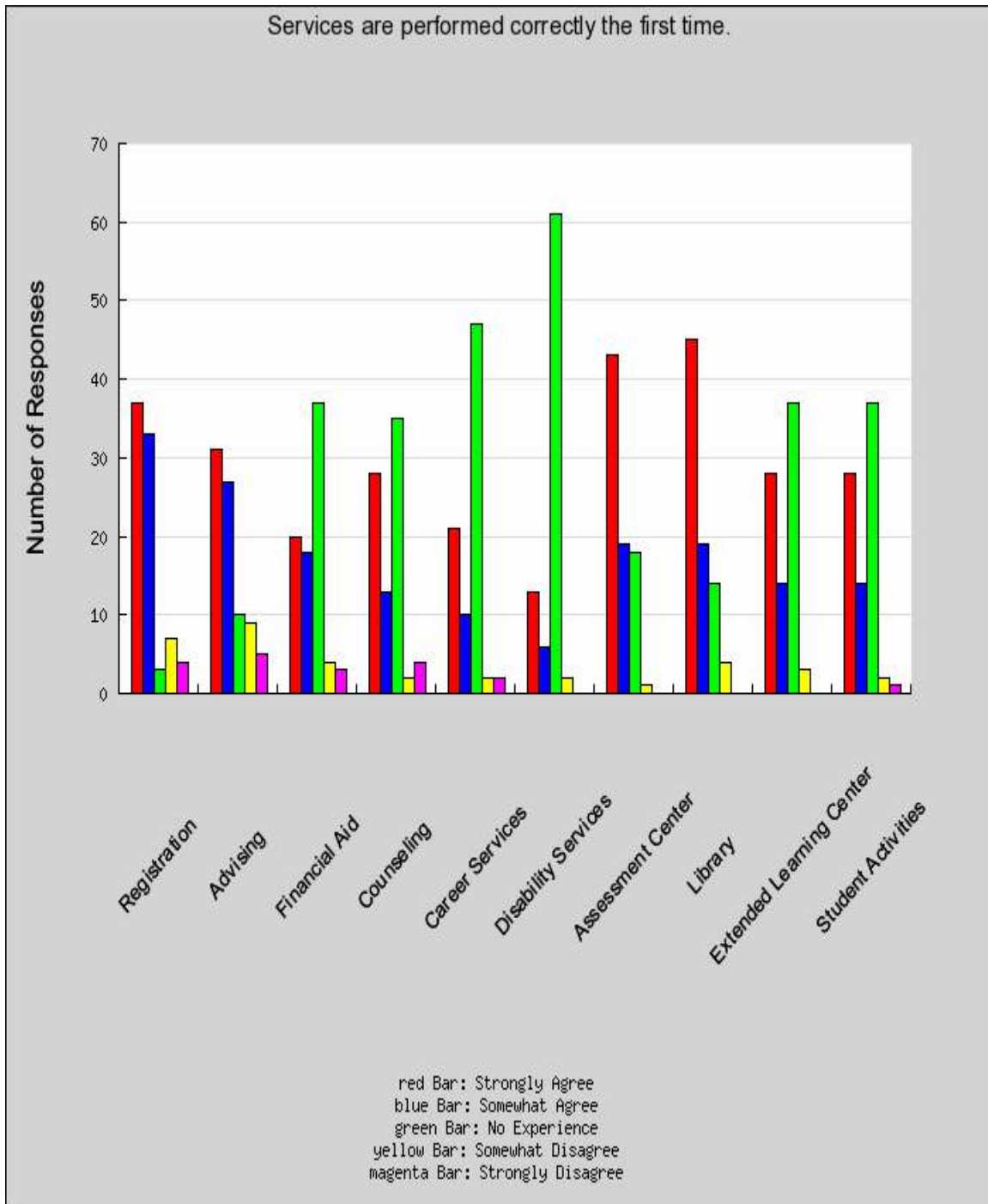


Figure 30 Services Performed Correctly the First Time

Dissatisfaction exists in Registration and Advising, but the percentages are not as high as staff perceive. Evidently, students are more satisfied than anticipated. Other departments rank satisfactory in performing the service correctly the first time.

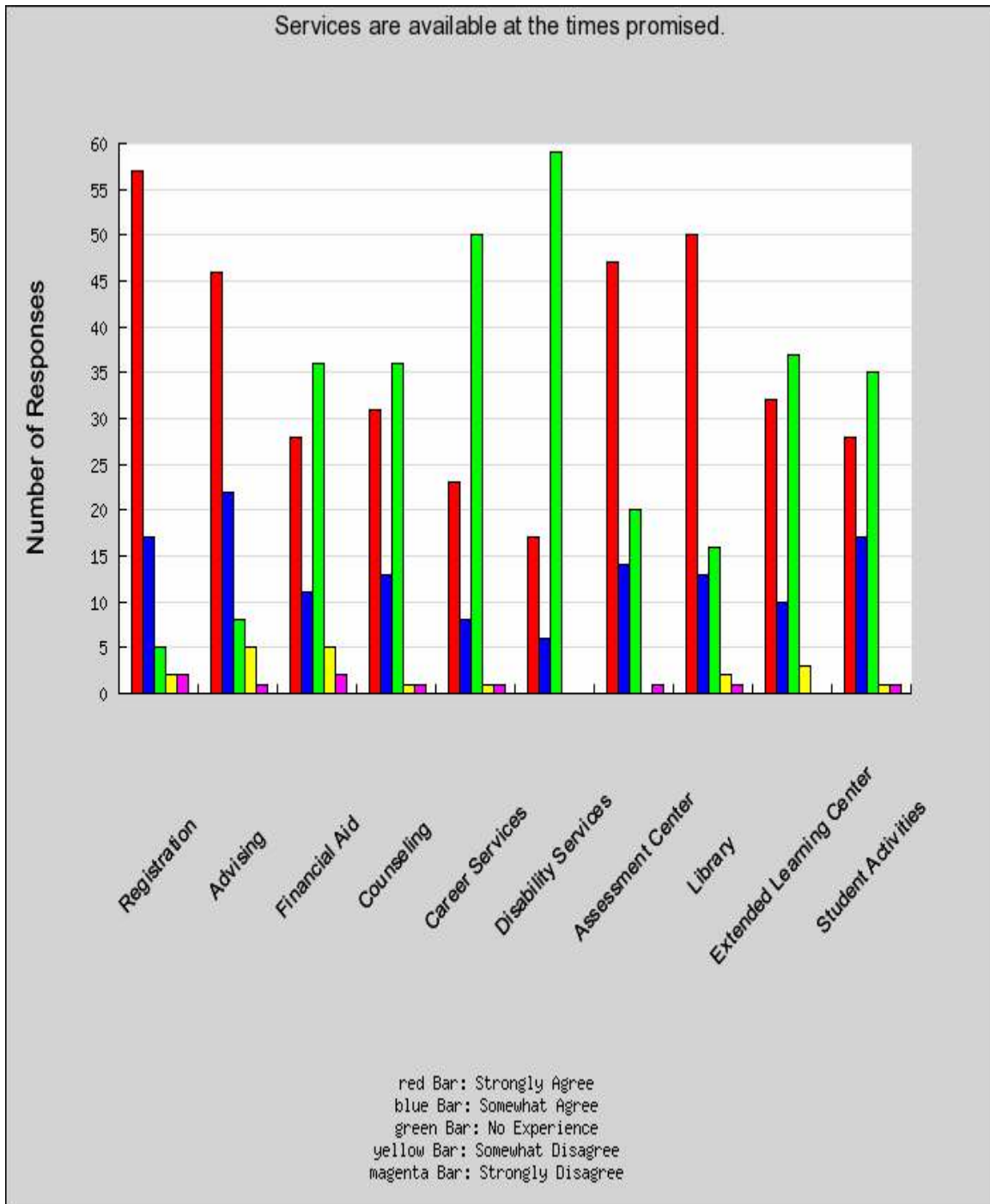


Figure 31 Services Available at Times Promised

Students do not experience many problems with services being available as promised. Registration and Advising percentages of dissatisfaction are closely related to the staff perception rankings, pointing to the potential problem of technological malfunction.



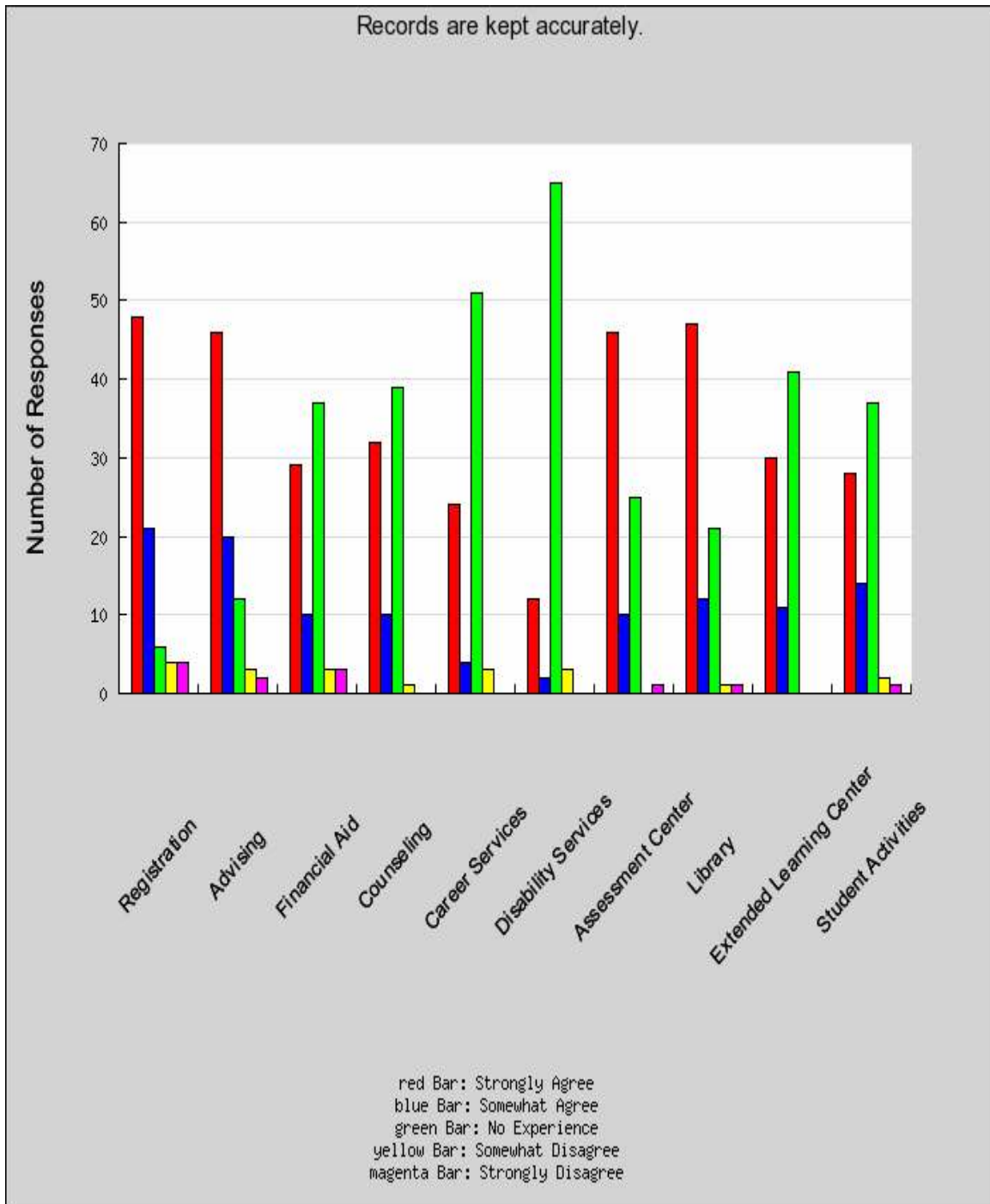


Figure 32 Records Kept Accurately

For the most part, students are either unaware of record keeping practices or they are satisfied that records are kept accurately. Approximately 6% - 9% are not satisfied with Registration, Advising, and Financial Aid.

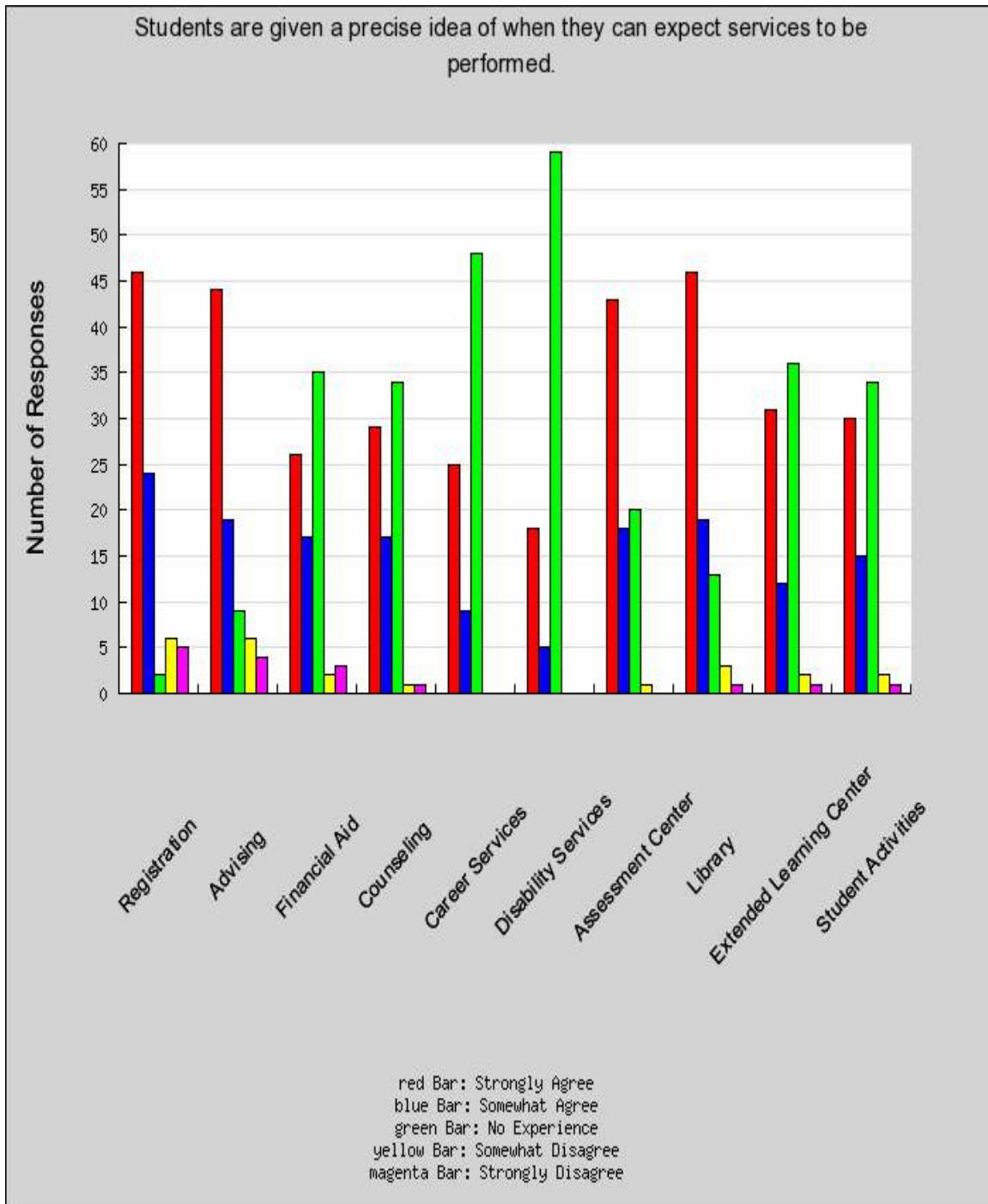


Figure 33 Students Given Precise Idea of Expected Service Time

Students are satisfied because student service departments give them a precise idea of when to expect services will be complete. Registration and Advising received 13% and 12% dissatisfaction, respectively. Other areas received minimal votes of dissatisfaction.

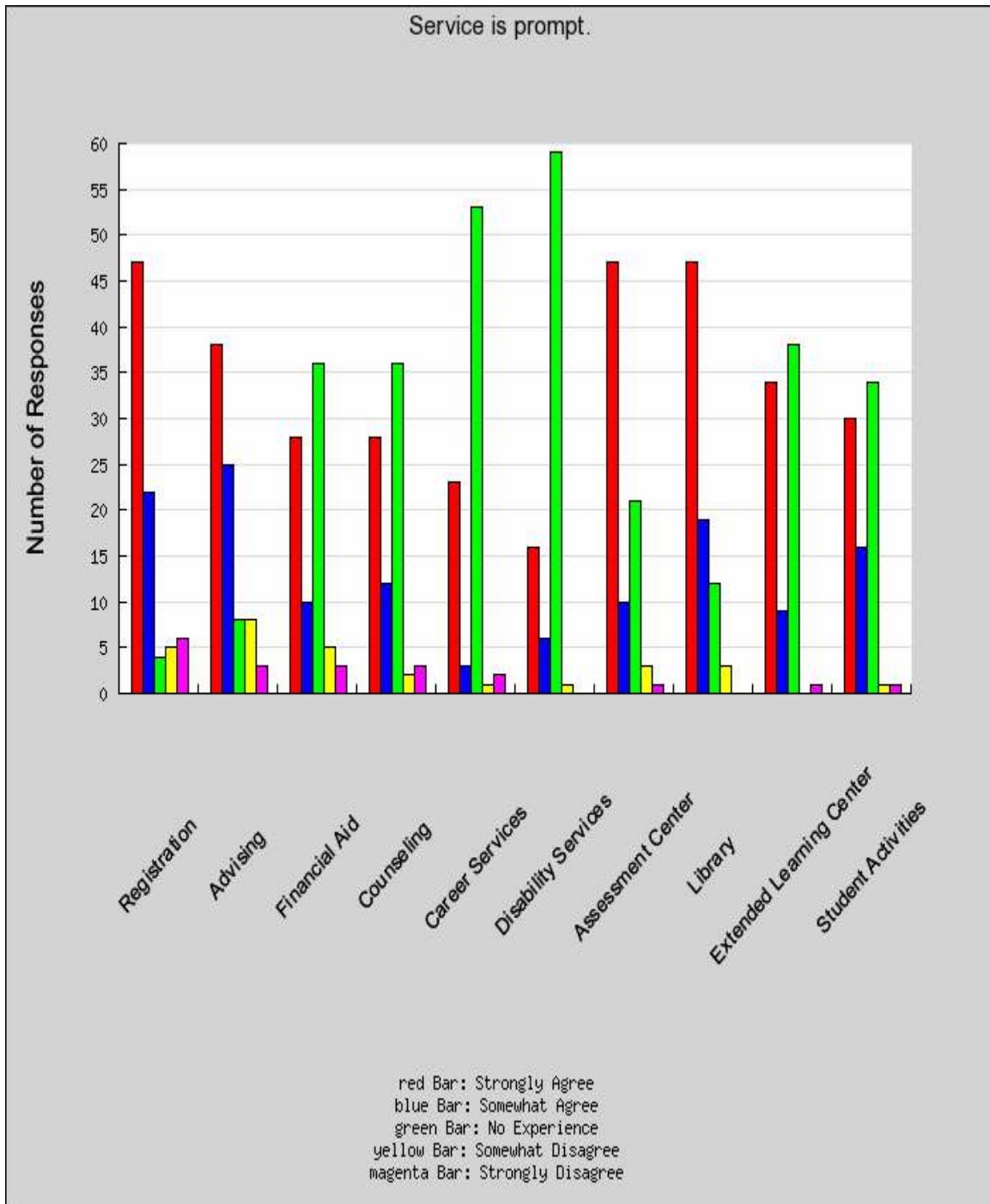


Figure 34 Service is Prompt

For those students who are aware of these student services, a majority are satisfied with the promptness in which services are rendered. Even where there is slight dissatisfaction (Registration and Advising), students are satisfied 82% and 75% of the time, respectively.

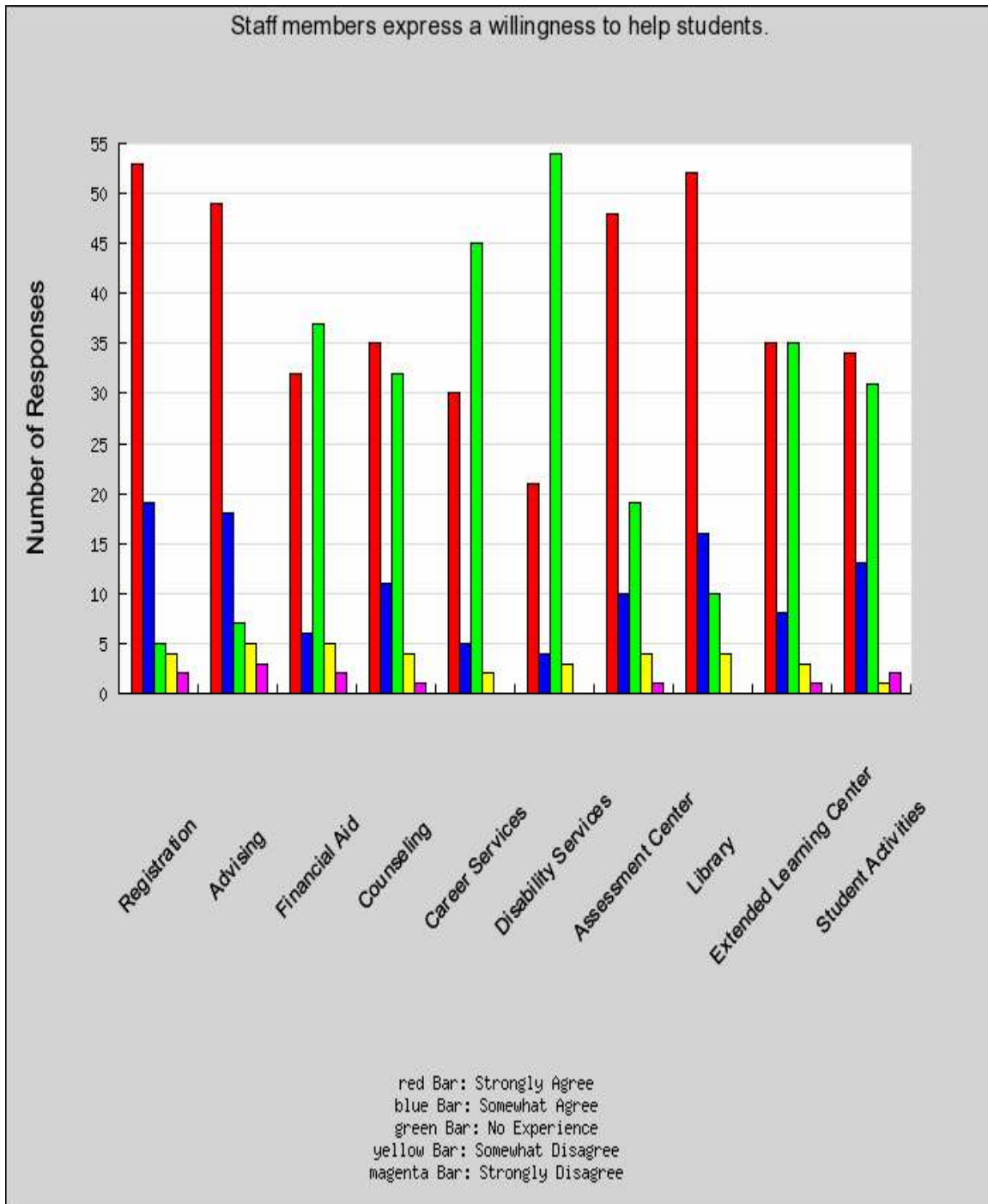


Figure 35 Staff Members Express a Willingness to Help

Once again it is evident most students are not aware of all Tomball College offers. Registration and Advising are necessary and students rate their satisfaction at over 80%. Students rank other areas as favorable, proving that when students take advantage of student services, they receive a genuine willingness to help.

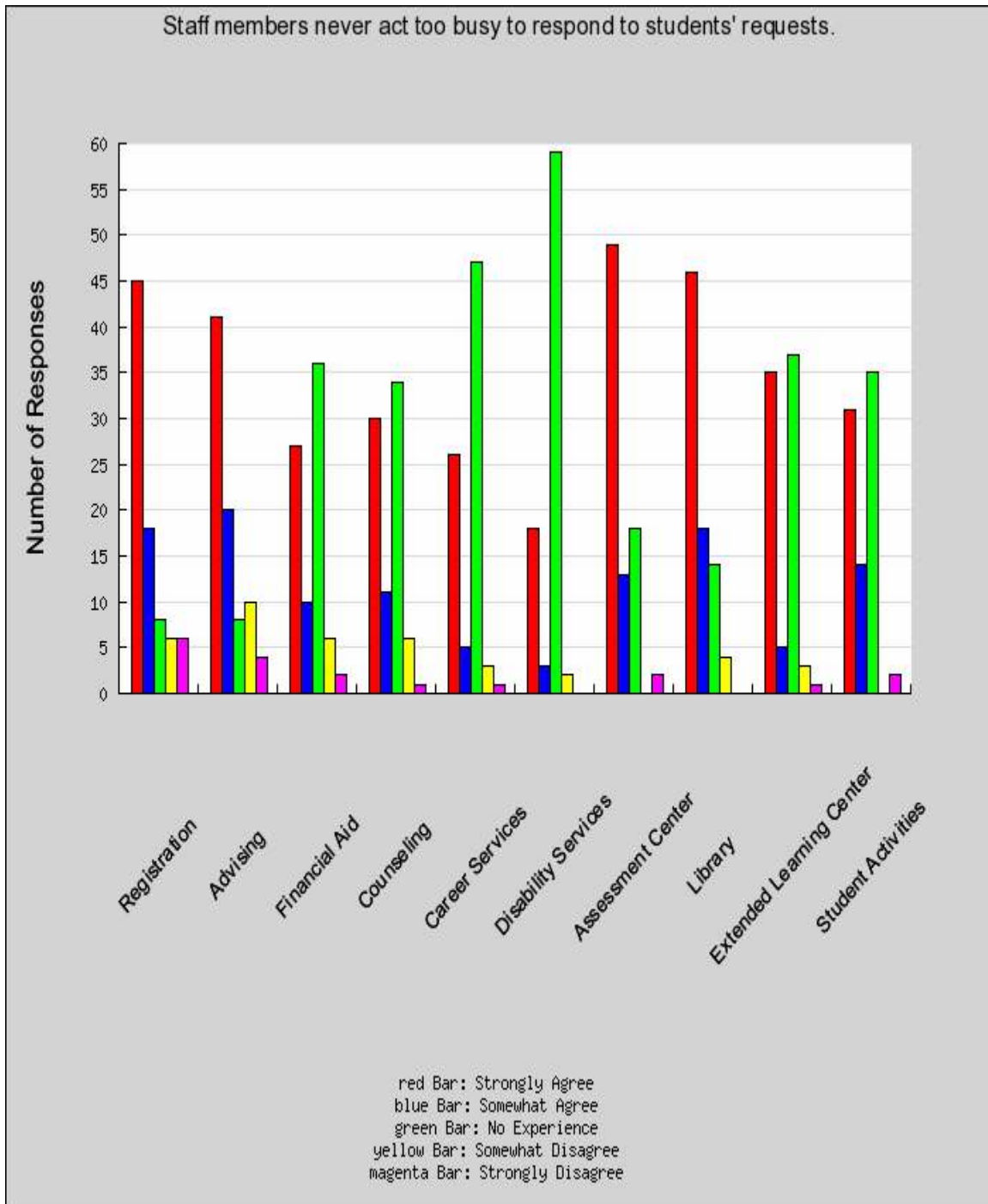


Figure 36 Staff Members Never Act Too Busy to Respond

Some students in every category disagree, showing some dissatisfaction related to how busy staff members are. Students do not always plan ahead and are often in a rush to meet a deadline or leave campus. Again, many students are not even familiar with services offered.

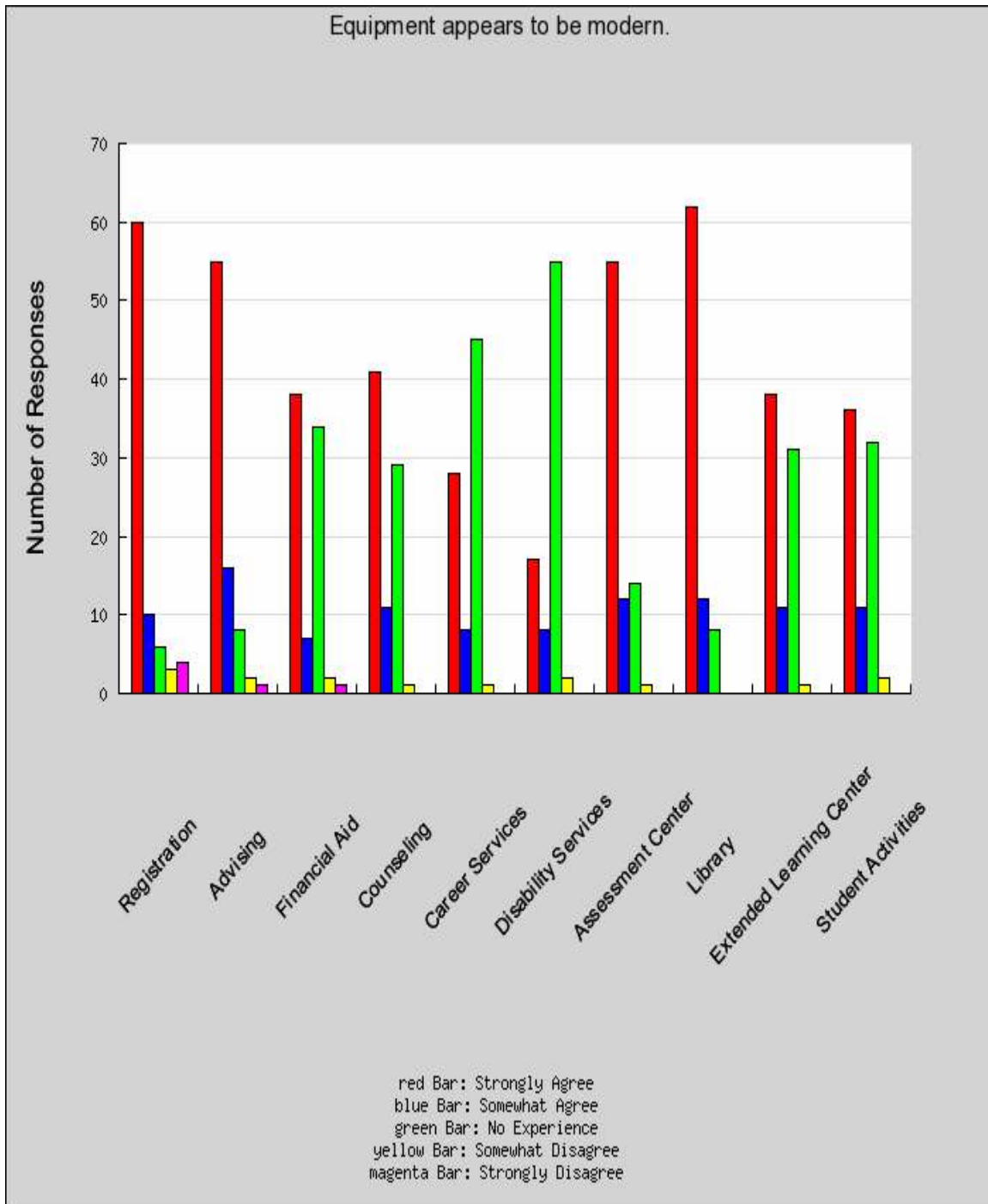


Figure 37 Equipment Appears to be Modern

Students are satisfied with the appearance of the equipment in student services. Registration and advising received minimal dissatisfaction in this area, leading one to question the difference between appearance and capability.

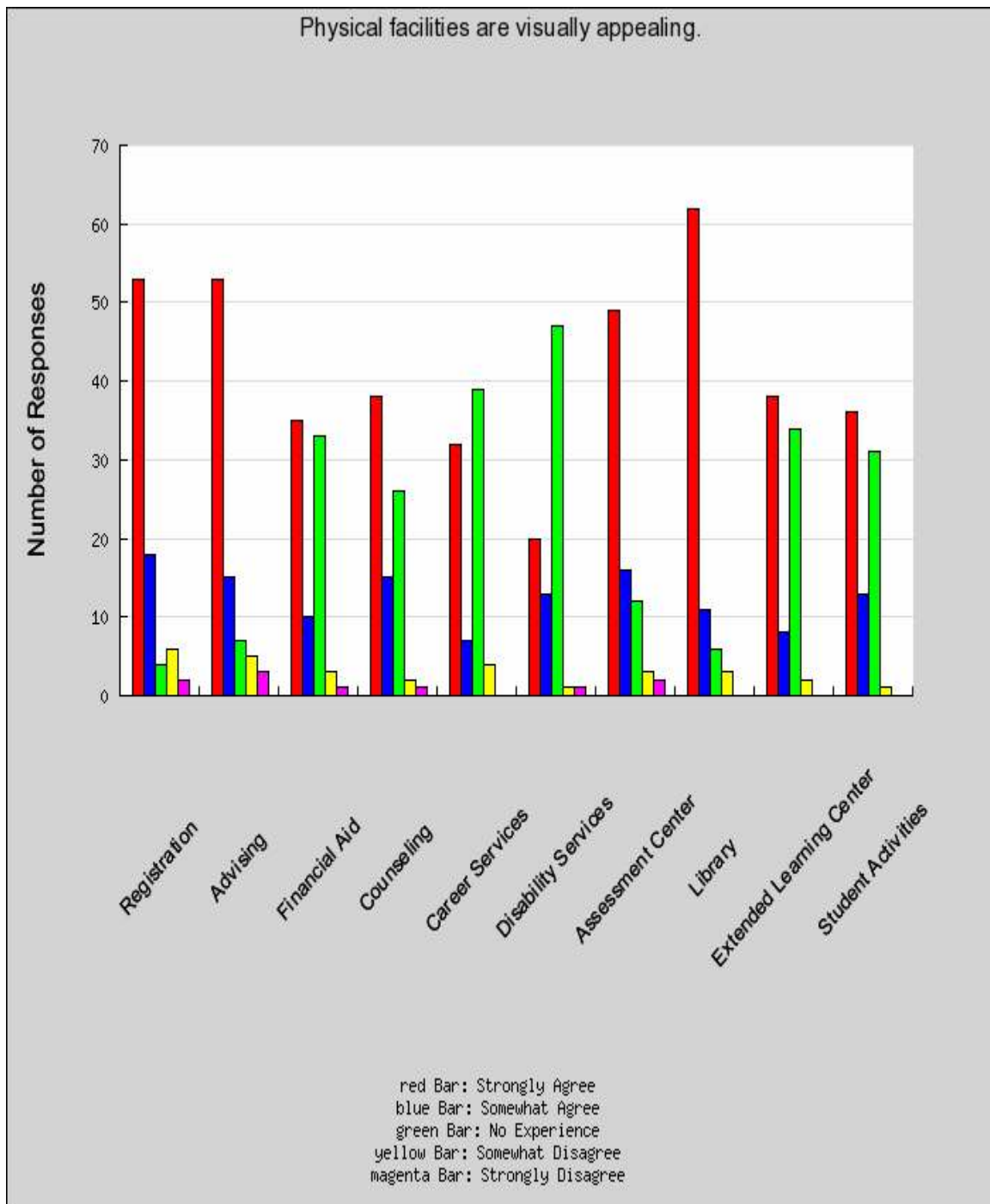


Figure 38 Physical Facilities are Visually Appealing

Students rate the physical facilities of Registration and Advising equal (strongly agree and somewhat agree) to those of the Library and Extended Learning Center, which are in the new building.

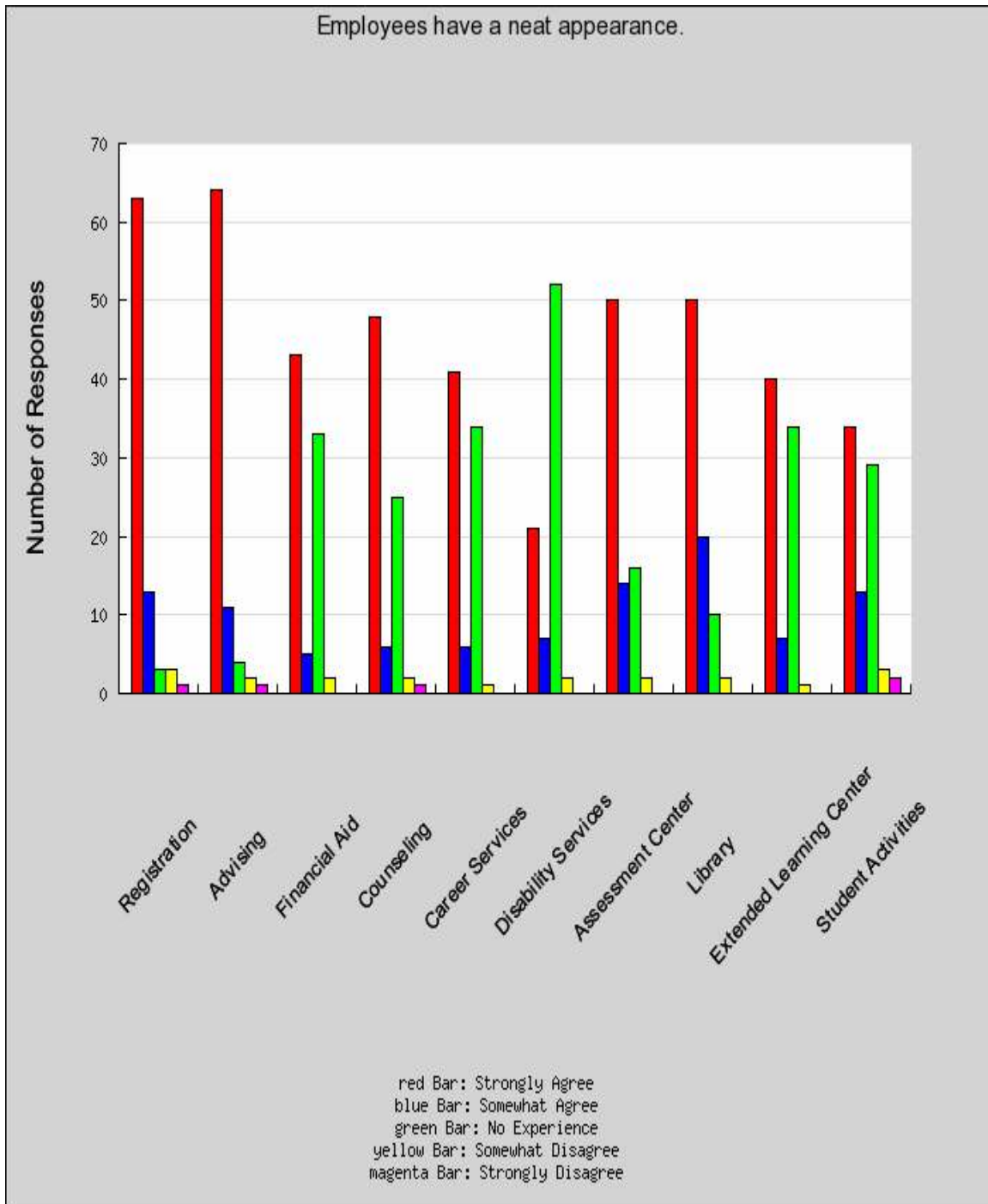


Figure 39 Employees Have a Neat Appearance

Students rank Registration and Advising the highest regarding the neatness of employees' dress. Interestingly enough, students work at the front counter.



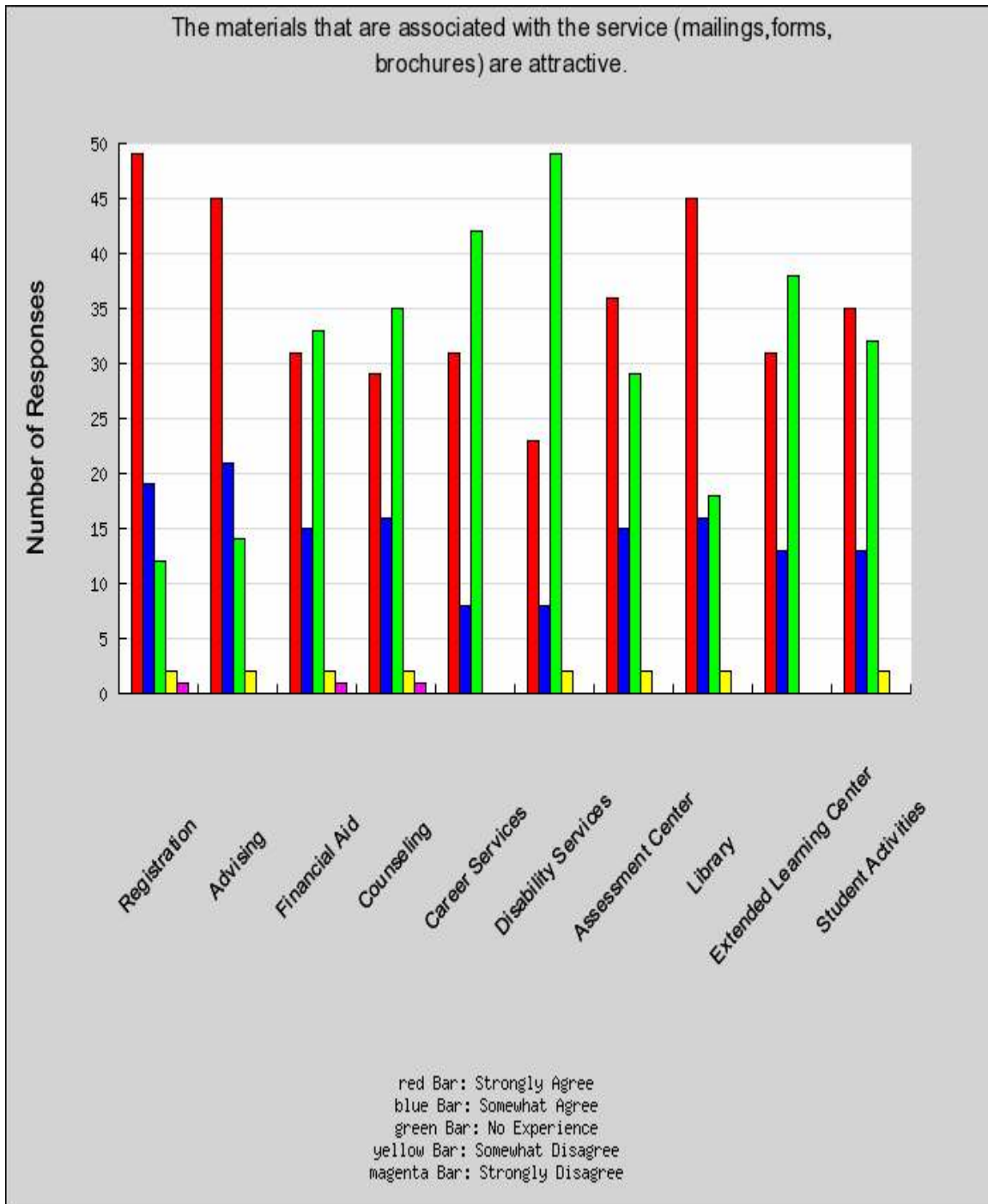


Figure 40 Materials Associated with Service are Attractive

Registration and Advising are the most well-known services, so it is no surprise that students are familiar with their materials. They rank them higher than all other departments, although there is virtually no dissatisfaction in other areas as well.

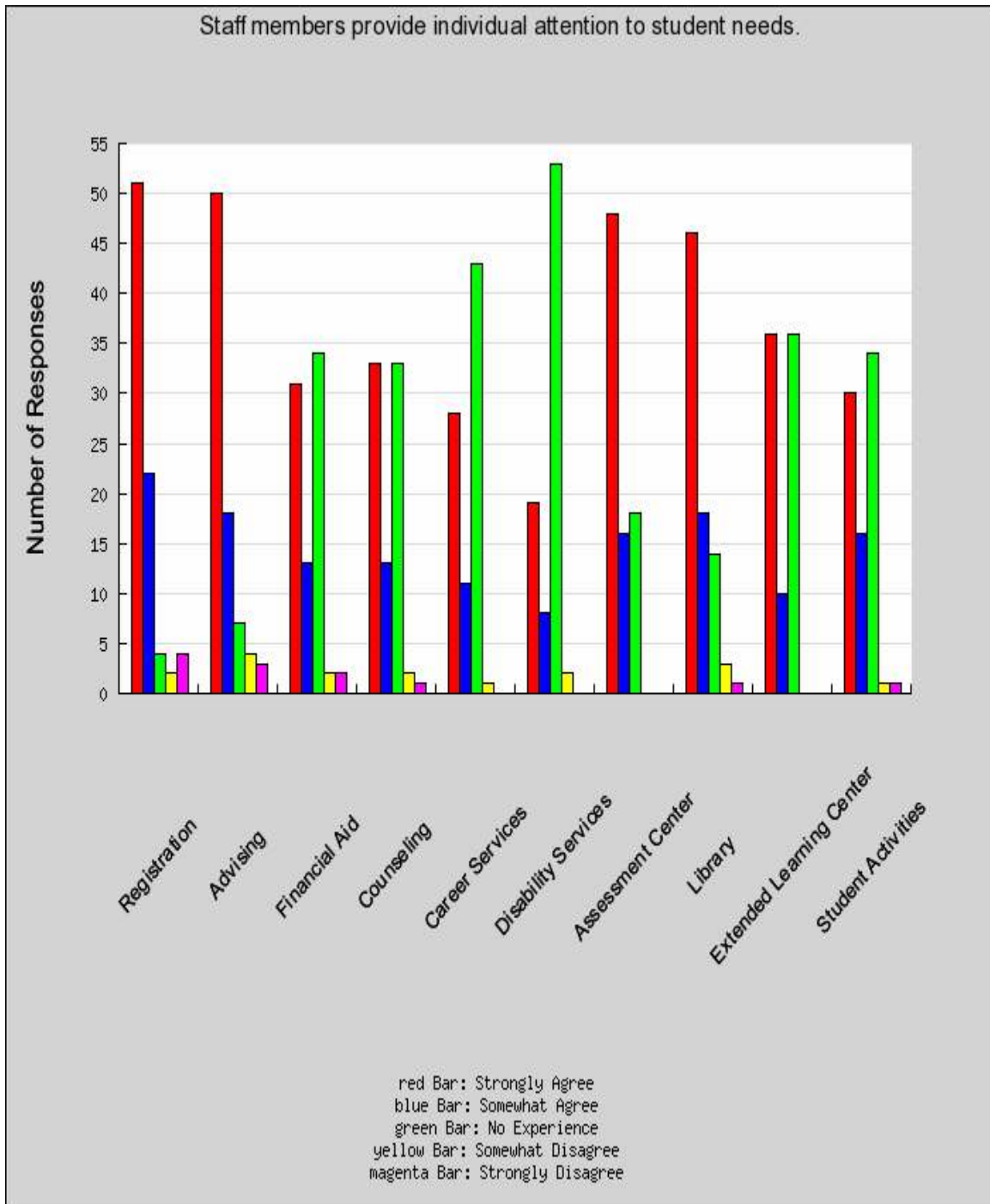


Figure 41 Staff Members Provide Individual Attention to Student Needs

Students agree that staff members provide individual attention to their needs.

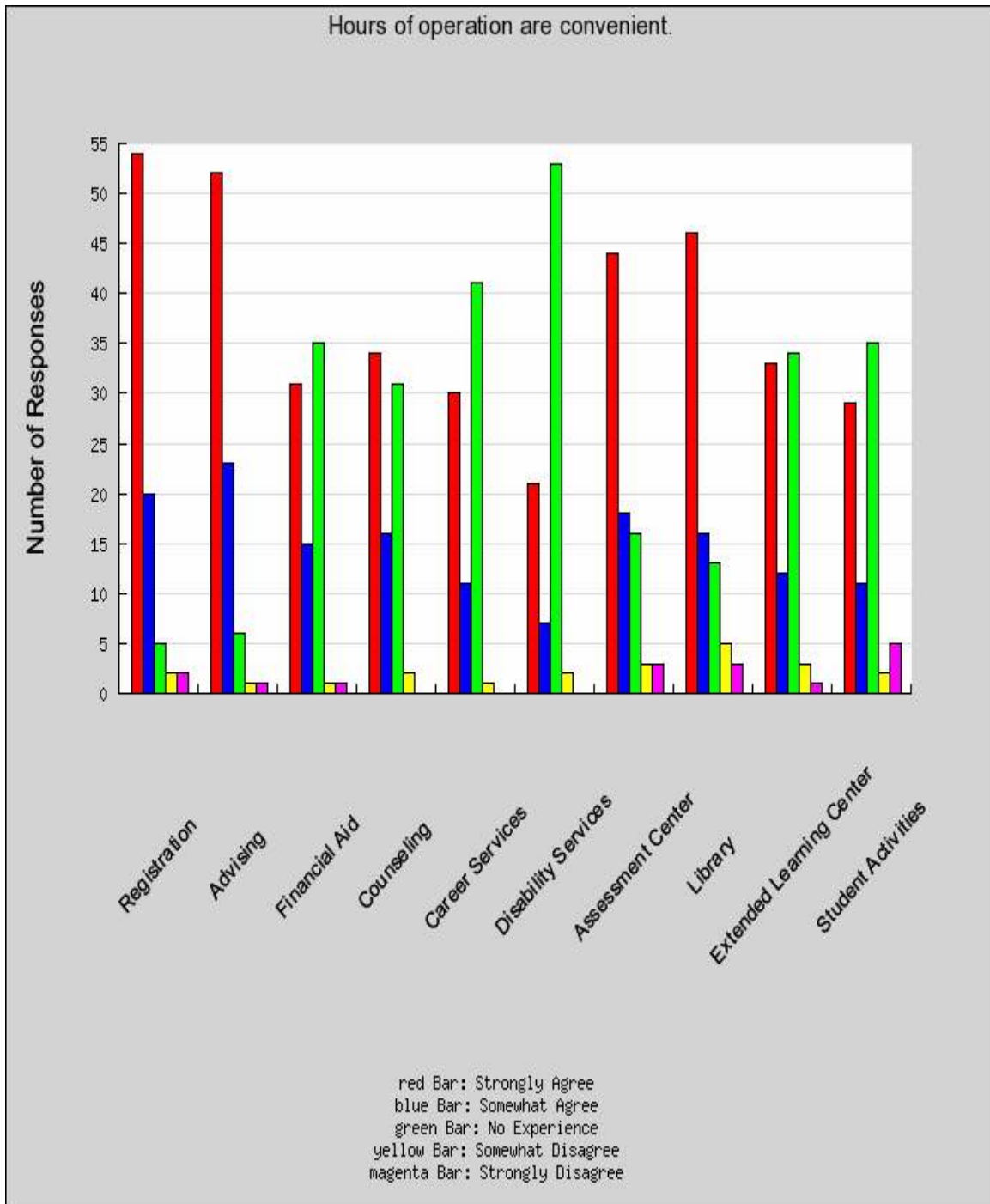


Figure 42 Hours of Operation are Convenient

Students are more satisfied with Registration and Advising hours compared to other areas. The Library ranks third, and the Assessment Center follows. They all offer extended hours to students.

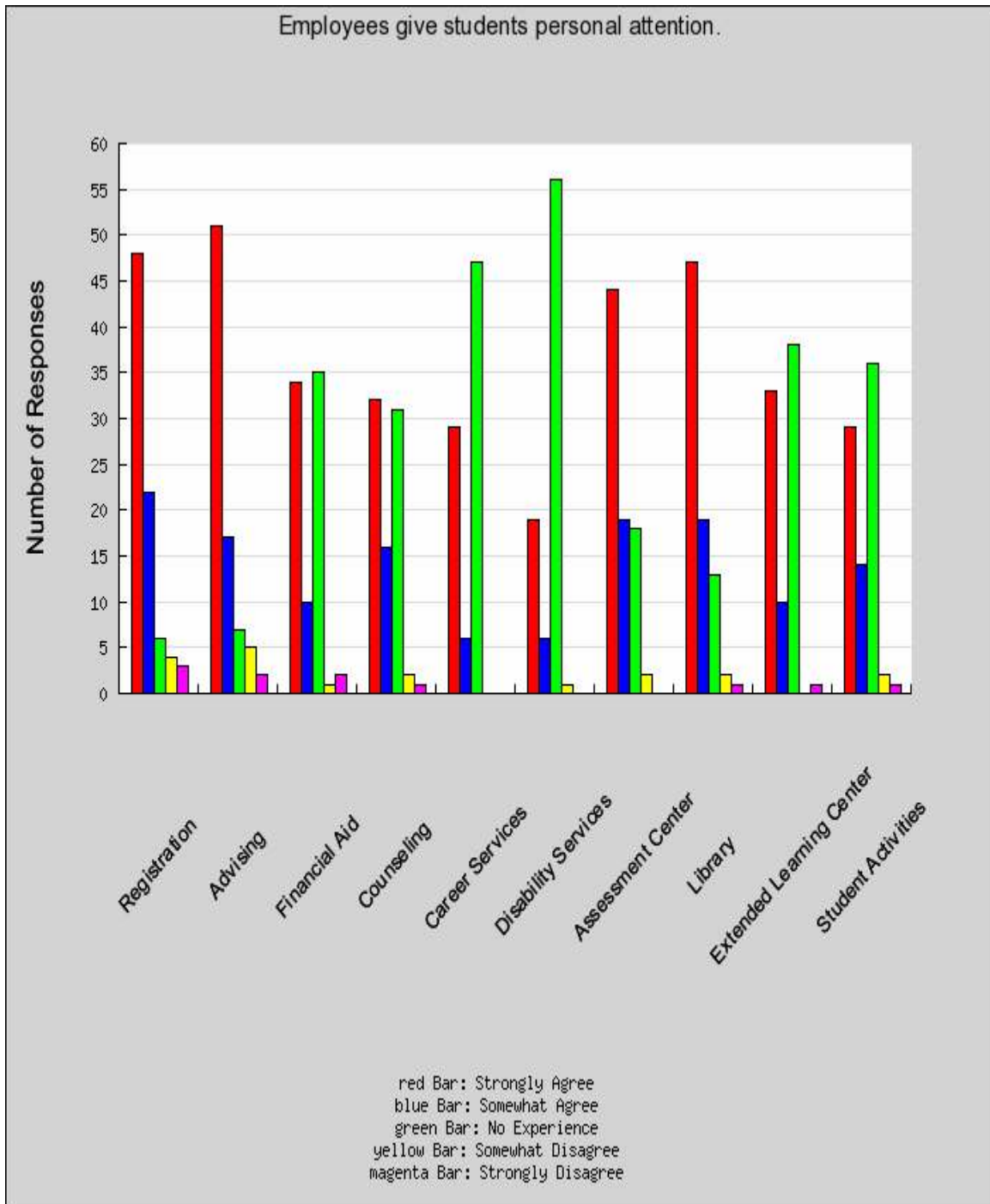


Figure 43 Employees Give Students Personal Attention

Students experience personal attention when they take advantage of student services. A minimal number of students disagree in several areas.

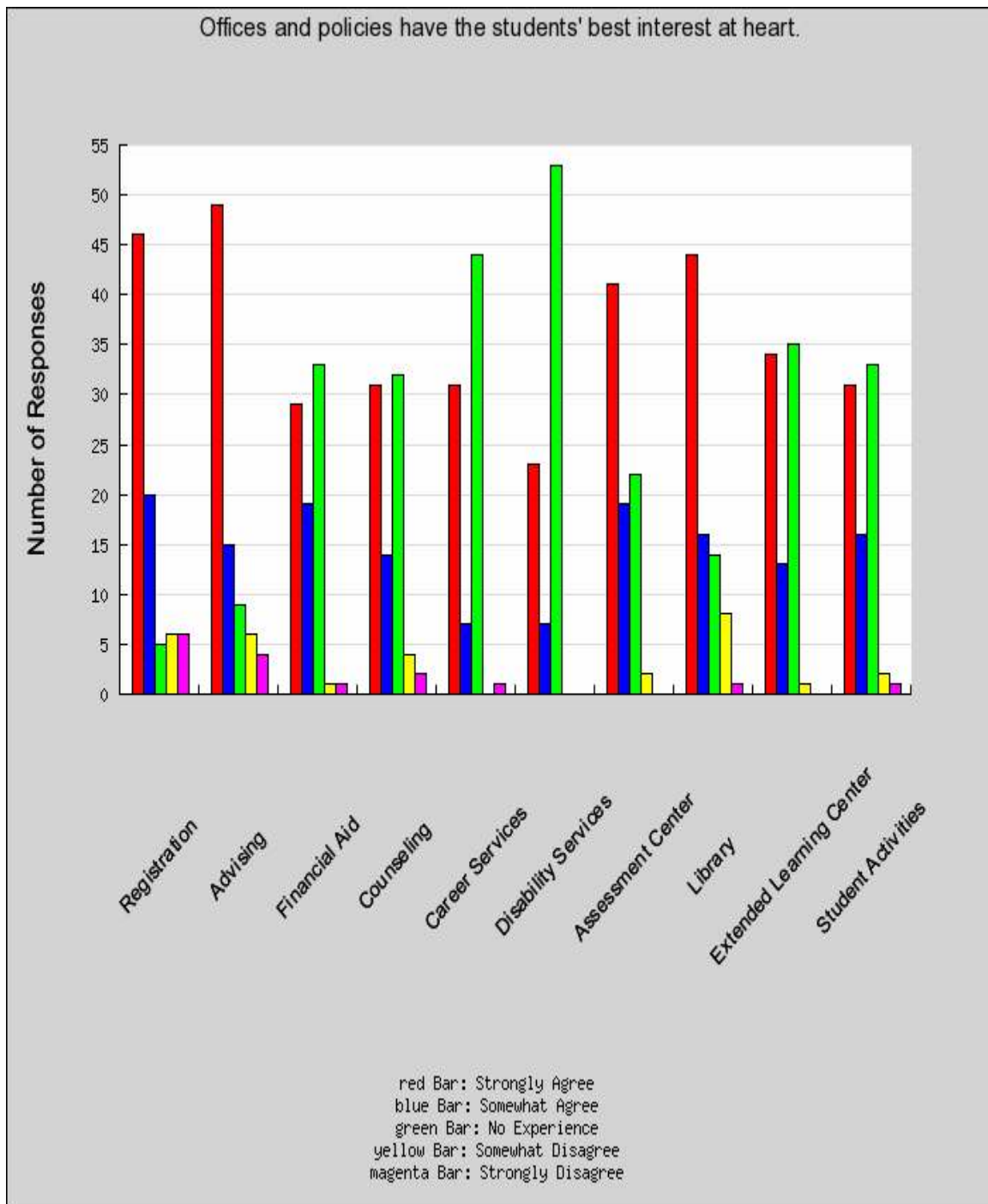


Figure 44 Offices and Policies Have Students' Best Interest at Heart

Students agree that offices and policies have their best interest at heart, but the student focus group experienced difficulty naming examples. Over 30% of students are unfamiliar with Financial Aid, Counseling, Career Services, the Extended Learning Center, and Student Activities.

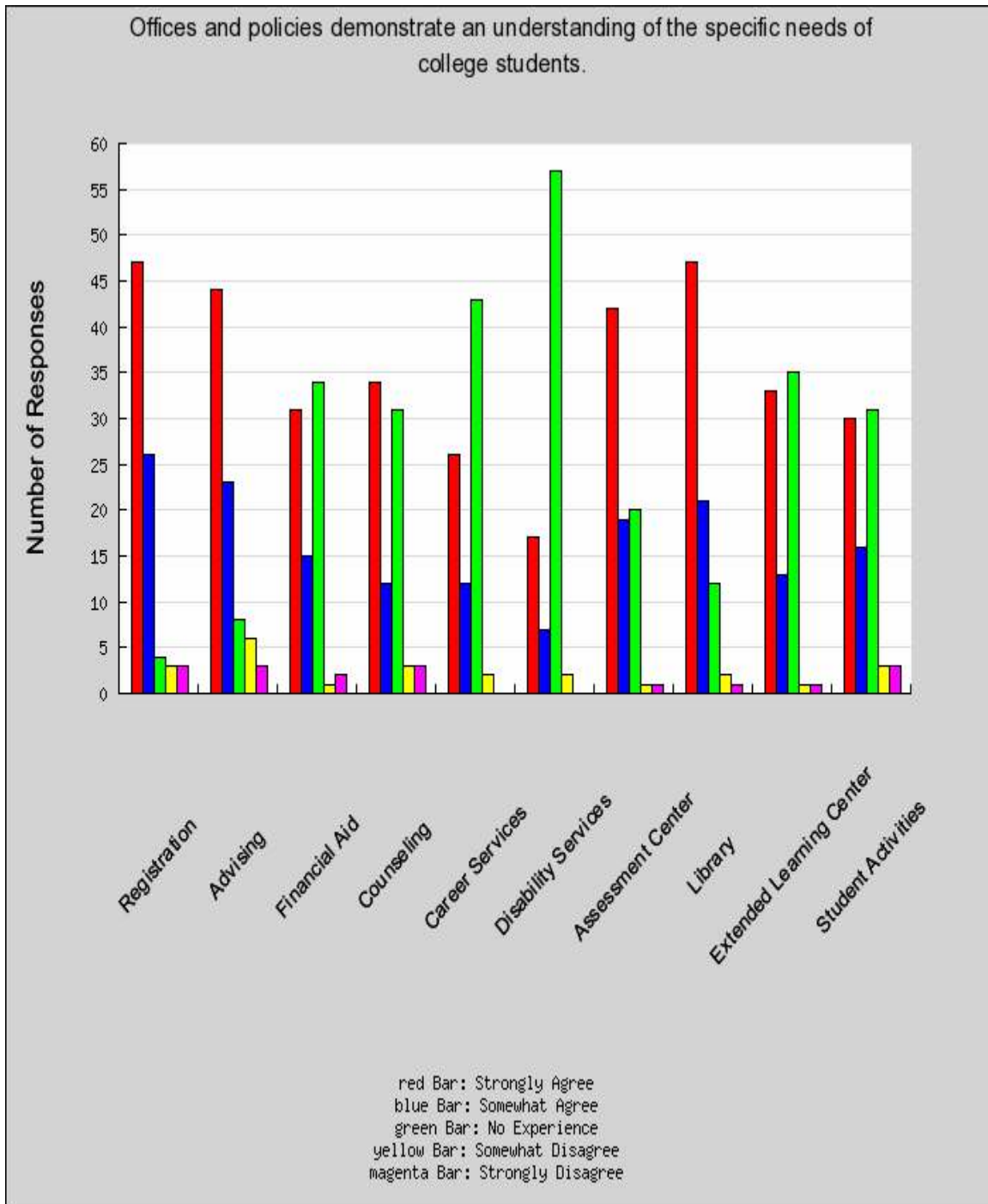


Figure 45 Offices and Policies Demonstrate Understanding of Student Needs

When students are familiar with a department, they agree that offices and policies demonstrate an understanding of college students' needs.

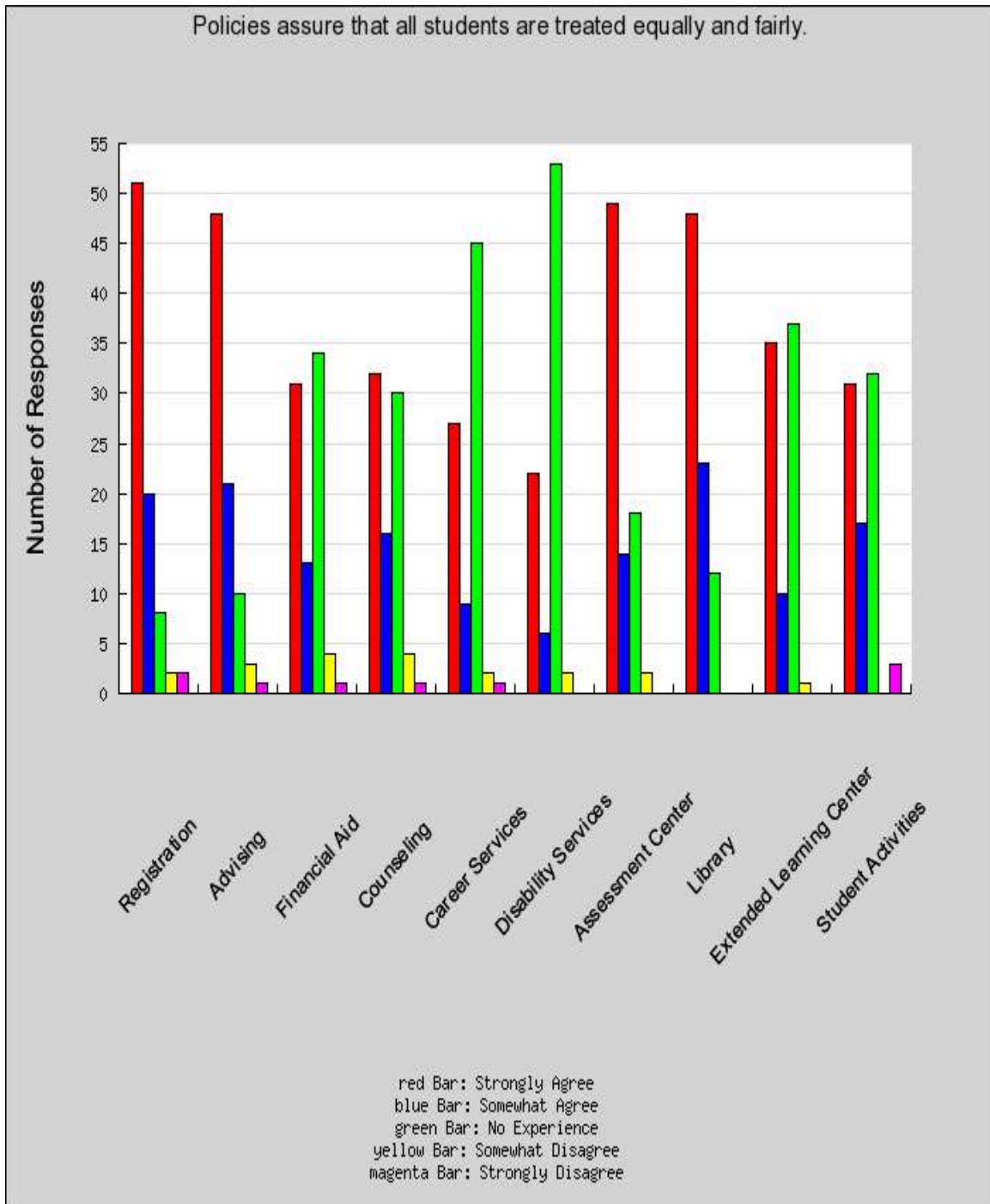


Figure 46 Policies Assure All Students are Treated Equally and Fairly

Students believe that offices and policies treat everyone equally and fairly.

## **MAJOR FINDINGS**

### **Questions Presented to Focus Groups**

The following focus group questions resulted from the table elements determined to be significant on pages 70 - 79. Additional questions were added to investigate agreement in dissatisfaction of specific areas.

1. What can staff members do to express a willingness to help?
2. Name any obstacles you see in staff being willing to help.
3. How is prompt service related to student success and satisfaction?
4. How is student satisfaction related to the staff providing accurate information?
5. How do modern equipment and visually appealing facilities affect satisfaction?
6. How do offices and policies demonstrate having the students' best interest at heart?
7. What changes could be made for students to feel that offices and policies have their best interest at heart?
8. Advising: What is Tomball doing well?
9. Advising: What should Tomball be doing?
10. Advising: What does Tomball need to improve?
11. Registration: What is Tomball doing well?
12. Registration: What should Tomball be doing?
13. Registration: What does Tomball need to improve?
14. Where do students get information about services offered?
15. What can Tomball do to increase awareness?
16. What other suggestions do you have to improve student services at Tomball College? (discussed later)



## **Survey Results Categories Defined**

These abbreviations will be used in the findings discussions to define the areas from the preceding charts:

Strongly Agree = StA

Somewhat Agree = SoA

Somewhat Disagree = SoD

Strongly Disagree = StD

No Experience = NE

## **Organization**

This section is organized by focus group question. The question is defined and all groups' survey and focus group results are compiled. A brief narrative is presented for each section, and further analysis will be completed in Chapter 5. Remember the electronic survey was administered to all employees to determine overall perception of student satisfaction. Group 1 (faculty and staff) and Group 2 (deans and directors) were combined in the electronic survey; however, they were separated during the focus groups. The researcher decided to separate the groups when meeting face-to-face because faculty and staff had the potential to be influenced negatively or positively by the presence of deans and directors.

### **I. What can staff members do to express a willingness to help?**

Satisfaction is more than receiving a service; it is service with a genuine smile and welcoming demeanor. Does the student feel that the employee across the counter or the dean assisting with an important matter really wants to make sure the problem is resolved?

### ***Employee Survey Results***

Counseling, Assessment Center, and Library scored 70% or greater in the StA category. When considering the StA and SoA categories, all but Career Services,

Disability Services, and Student Activities score 70% or greater. The NE categories are high in all three lower scoring areas: 46%, 35%, and 32%, respectively. In fact, the SoD and StD numbers represent zero (Career Services) to three people (Disability Services). Career Services and Student Activities work mainly with students, so perhaps faculty and staff do not have as much interaction with these areas. Disability Services faces several challenges, such as shortage of part-time staff. It is possible the three who feel an unwillingness to help are actually unhappy with the results of challenges because they affect the student in individuals' courses.

### ***Student Survey Results***

Advising, Library, and Registration all ranked at 80%, 81%, and 86%, respectively in StA and SoA. There were minimal amounts of SoD and StD, but the NE ratings were quite high in some areas: Financial Aid (44%), Career Services (54%), Extended Learning Center (42%), and Student Activities (37%).

### ***Faculty and Staff Focus Group Results***

1. Listen
2. Take person directly to an office instead of giving instructions
3. Wear "Ask Me" badges, English/Spanish
4. Faculty should be involved in student activities
5. Show genuine concern
6. Go the extra mile to help lost people
7. Have a welcoming demeanor
8. Address students by name
9. Focus on the person; don't be distracted by phone, computer, or other
10. All faculty/staff should have a general knowledge of the college – perhaps an orientation is needed for new staff
11. Be resourceful

Faculty and staff have a good idea of what staff members can do to express a willingness to help. Basic customer service examples include showing genuine concern for the student and listening. Staff members should focus on the person without being distracted by the phone or computer. Staff need to possess other, perhaps simple characteristics, such as presenting a welcoming demeanor and addressing the student by name. Faculty and staff believe in going the extra mile to help, for instance, leading people directly to an office instead of giving directions.

This group also sees the need to be visible on campus – that is participating in various special events and student activities. Faculty members specifically mention that if they are involved in student activities then students will feel more comfortable approaching them when a problem or concern arises.

Faculty and staff believe they should be familiar with the college, possessing a general knowledge of various departments and personnel. They feel that an orientation, similar to the adjunct orientation, would allow them to be more resourceful and assist them in helping students.

### ***Deans and Directors Focus Group Results***

1. Accommodate student schedules (as far as staying late)
2. Talk to students
3. Smile, Ask how you can help
4. Return Phone calls and e-mails
5. Collaborate with other divisions (CE) to meet students wider range of needs
6. Make personal contact for the students when referring them to another department
7. Listen
8. Look at student's perspective; don't equate them with staff
9. Take issues to the appropriate personnel – cross-divisional
10. Learn about the students' world
11. Name tags "We're willing to help"

12. Welcoming in person and on the phone
13. Be approachable
14. Be on time for appointments
15. Identify student issues or concerns, especially reoccurring ones
16. Investigate students' needs by questioning them further – get to the core concern (sometimes they don't know what they need) (they think they need one thing, but it turns out they need another)

Deans and directors feel the most important thing the college can do to express a willingness to help is to accommodate student schedules as much as possible, staying after hours if necessary. They feel college personnel need to talk to students, on a personal level as well as in groups, in order to find out what is important to them. As far as basic customer service, this group focuses on returning calls and e-mails in addition to being on time for appointments. Everyone needs to be welcoming, smile, listen to students, and be willing to go the extra mile by making personal contact with fellow colleagues in other departments when referring students for assistance.

Deans and directors propose staff collaborate with other divisions to meet a student's wider range of needs. They feel it is important to identify reoccurring student issues and concerns. They also see value in investigating students' needs by asking appropriate questions to identify specific needs. This approach ensures that students are not victims of ignorance - that is "they do not know what they do not know."

### ***Student Focus Group Results***

1. Be visible around campus
2. Take a personal interest in student needs
3. Get to know students
4. Pay attention to individual needs
5. Be involved with student activities
6. Provide a quick response

7. Maintain eye contact with students
8. Smile = Be approachable
9. Be Genuine
10. Body Language = Approachable/Willing to help

Students place greatest importance on the visibility of staff around campus (in the cafeteria, at special events, and student activities). When employees are visible and actively involved, they express a willingness to help. Staff should make time for students by taking a personal interest and helping when necessary. Students are individuals and want to be recognized as such. They feel a quick response to any inquiry is evidence that staff want to help. Students feel the following interactions are all important: maintain eye contact, smile, be genuine, and be approachable.

## **II. Name any obstacles you see in staff being willing to help.**

It is obvious to the researcher that employees who do not exhibit helpful characteristics or who fail to practice the behaviors mentioned above are an obstacle to the student. The researcher is interested in missing links. Now, it is important to hear from each group what proves to be a barrier and inhibits students from receiving help.

### ***Employee Survey Results***

This question is intended to be a response to the previous question. It does not correspond to a specific question in the electronic survey, although it does relate to several ideas: courtesy, interest in resolving problems, and staff not acting too busy to respond to students. When asked about employees being consistently courteous with students, faculty and staff rated six out of 10 areas a 74% or higher in the StA and SoA categories. Of the four areas that scored below 74%, the NE category ranged from 22% to 51%. No more than four respondents rated those four areas as SoD or StD.

Faculty and staff rated three areas at 75% or better when considering if staff members show a sincere interest in resolving problems. No more than five (out of 65)

respondents rated any one area as SoD or StD. Perhaps faculty and staff do not know people in other areas well enough to know how they respond to problems.

No areas rated above 69% in response to “Staff members never act too busy to respond to students’ requests.” Respondents assigning a SoD or StD ranged from two to twelve in any given area. NE responses account for 15% to 55%. Interestingly enough, Registration scored the highest StA and SoA (69% total) in this area, although it serves all students and ranks among the highest in dissatisfaction in other questions. Obviously, staff are not too busy, but other problems exist.

### ***Student Survey Results***

Students strongly agree or somewhat agree that employees are consistently courteous in Advising (86%), Library (85%), and Registration (89%). In actuality, all other areas fared as well, although the percentages can be misleading. Very few students strongly disagreed or somewhat disagreed for any one area. The major difference is the number of students who stated they had no experience with an area. Extracting Disability Services and Assessment Center for lack of use by the majority of students, other areas ranked 35% - 55% NE.

Only zero to eight students marked SoD or StD in any area related to staff members showing a sincere interest in resolving problems. Once again, the NE ratings make the difference. Excluding Disability Services, up to 58% of students are unaware of service areas or they experience no problems to witness resolution attempts by staff.

Students in Registration and Advising report SoD or StD 14% and 17% of the time, respectively, regarding staff members acting too busy to respond to them. Others report some dissatisfaction, but the percentages are below 10%. Everyone else agrees that staff always make time or they have no experience in an area.

### ***Faculty and Staff Focus Group Results***

1. Lack of information desk (in Commons and at each corridor intersection)

2. Signage inconsistent
3. Maps needed – difficult to explain our layout to students who need directions
4. Staff is too busy, especially during peak times
5. Problems with IT – can't access info to help students

Faculty and staff would like to see information desks at each corridor intersection with the Commons. They feel signage is inconsistent, making it difficult to direct students around campus due to its design layout. Additionally, they feel personnel are too busy to help students, particularly during peak times. Although technology problems, such as server breakdowns and processing speed, ranked last on the list, they are the most annoying obstacle because students must be turned away.

#### ***Deans and Directors Focus Group Results***

1. Staff not knowing students' needs
2. Overloaded
3. Administration perspectives versus managerial needs
4. Malfunctioning technology
5. People not understanding the mission of the community college
6. Budget restraints
7. Inability to let students know what's going on (services, events)
8. Systems that are in place (requirements, class schedules, fin aid regulations)
9. Lack of customer service training
10. People inadvertently provide inaccurate information
11. Conflicting information on what systems are supposed to do versus what they do  
(even between DSTC and TC)
12. Time restraints

Deans and directors feel the greatest obstacle is staff not knowing students' needs. They believe staff are overloaded, and there is a disparity between administrative perspectives and managerial needs. This group also voices frustration about

malfunctioning technology. Additionally, employees who do not understand the mission of the community college are a barrier. It is imperative that everyone understand the population in terms of personal goals and challenges in order to serve students well. Budget and time constraints are a constant obstacle, particularly when staff coverage is an issue. Further obstacles include a lack of customer service training as well as a lack of knowledge, which result in employees inadvertently providing inaccurate information. Deans and directors also mention conflicting information on what systems are supposed to do and what they actually do, citing My Educational Plan as an example. The system does not automatically upload and account for changes in course selection by students, resulting in incorrect degree evaluations.

### ***Student Focus Group Results***

1. Always busy
2. Take the time to help the students when they need it
3. Individual guidance on schedules needed
4. What is important to students doesn't seem to be what's important to staff
5. Accept that they might be wrong
6. Lack of general knowledge about the college
7. Be patient with students when they need help
8. Need of updated syllabi with contact information
9. Lack of activity hour - Students used to see instructors in the cafeteria or know they could talk to them during this time because there were no classes.
10. No time to meet instructors before or after classes. Student and instructor schedules include back to back classes.

Students believe the major obstacle in staff being willing to help is that they are too busy. Staff also experience difficulty with admitting when they do not know something or when they are wrong about something. Students point out that all staff do not possess a general knowledge about the college, which limits their ability to assist. In



fact, it sometimes hinders their ability to help because they give incorrect information. Students point out that staff are impatient and what is important to them is not important to the staff. Students emphasize the importance of updated syllabi, specifically updated contact information for faculty. Lastly, students relate the elimination of an activity hour with decreased employee presence in common areas, like the cafeteria. This point is compounded because classes are scheduled back-to-back and there is no time before or after classes for students to meet with instructors.

### **III. How is prompt service related to student success and satisfaction?**

Prompt service encompasses several ideas:

- How long do students wait in line?
- Is the first employee able to assist?
- How long does it take to finally meet the student's needs?
- Are services provided within the time-frames and deadlines promised?

#### ***Employee Survey Results***

The Assessment Center is alone at 75% StA and SoA, while all other areas rate between 38% and 69%. NE responses range from 14% to 60%. Nine to 17 respondents (14% - 26%) rank Registration, Advising, Financial Aid, and Disability Services as SoD or StD regarding prompt service. These areas are the most heavily accessed services, except for Disability Services, which experiences unique challenges.

#### ***Student Survey Results***

Student results are similar to previous questions; they are mostly satisfied that service is prompt. Advising and Registration rank at 75% and 82% StA and SoA. There is evidence of slight dissatisfaction in the same areas, with 13% of students in Advising and Registration ranking this category as SoD or StD. Financial Aid exhibits slight dissatisfaction, but only at 10%.

### ***Faculty and Staff Focus Group Results***

1. If students attended orientation, they would be more resourceful and be better equipped to ask for what they need
2. Positive experience leads to future business, sometimes by referral
3. Cross training would facilitate prompt service during peak times
4. Students don't understand terminology staff uses, which can delay the student following up
5. Lack of prompt service leads to frustration and potential loss of student, lowering the retention rate
6. Chaotic experiences lead to a belief of incompetence on the part of faculty, staff, and institution alike
7. Prompt service leads to being able to coordinate personal schedules better
8. Prompt service could be facilitated better with a Master Directory to which the students have access; they could direct their inquiries to the correct office the first time

Faculty and staff focus on the need for mandatory student orientation, believing that students would be more resourceful and better equipped to help themselves or ask for what they need, leading to faster service. Certain items, such as a Master Directory in the college catalog, would allow students to direct their inquiries to the correct office the first time. Faculty and staff believe that one positive experience leads to future business and potential referrals; whereas, lack of prompt service leads to frustration and the potential loss of the student. Chaotic experiences lead students or potential students to equate incompetence to faculty, staff, and the institution alike. Cross-training is seen as an important factor in facilitating prompt service, particularly during peak times. Educational lingo sometimes causes a delay in service because students do not understand the terminology staff use.

### ***Deans and Directors Focus Group Results***

1. We dictate what they get, not what they want or need
2. Faculty response to student e-mail and phone calls highly important
3. Technology system that works all the time
4. We treat them as students versus customers
5. Some things are not quick
6. We don't want to babysit – part of education is learning systems and processes
7. Need to evaluate current surveys (CCSSE, Gulf Coast, etc...) regarding promptness
8. There is a difference between service and meeting students needs (you have to get to the base of the needs – sometimes students don't know what they need)
9. Necessary to alert students of time line involved with certain processes
10. Problems with students knowing what we offer and where it is offered
11. Staff needs to recognize when a student is lost or needs more information
12. Impacts learning (ADA – tutoring and disability services need to be timely)
13. We need help interpreting data (from Instnl Rsch)
14. Necessary to place education as close to students as possible (multiple locations)
15. Be aware that students procrastinate, but still need the service quickly at that point
16. Students may not come back and give us a second chance if they do not receive a quick response.

This group's greatest concern is faculty and staff responding to e-mails and phone calls. When faculty and staff do not respond in a timely manner, deans and directors hear students' complaints. Closely aligned with that level of concern is properly functioning technology.

This group points out that students are not treated as customers, but also emphasizes that some situations or processes are not quick. Thus, prompt service is not always possible. Additionally, there is a difference between serving students promptly

and meeting their needs. Sometimes students do not know what they need, or they think they need one thing when they need another. Staff need to recognize a student's body language equating to non-comprehension and the need for more information. Departments need to be prepared for students who procrastinate, which changes the level of need when he or she appears for service.

Prompt service, or lack thereof, sometimes impacts learning, specifically related to ADA services or tutoring. Certain services require assistance at the beginning of the semester or when a potential problem is first identified. Tomball College currently participates in regional and national surveys, such as CCSSE and the Gulf Coast Standard Satisfaction Survey Analysis, and these results should be evaluated regarding promptness. Deans and directors need assistance interpreting data from local, regional, and national surveys in order to maximize their leadership potential.

### ***Student Focus Group Results***

1. Problem - Single person assigned to specific jobs. No cross training - If someone is out for two weeks, students must wait until that person returns.
2. Staff being at conferences impedes their ability to serve students. This is a problem when staff members are gone for several days.
3. Students don't have knowledge of what staff can do. They don't know what is possible and that certain staff members can help them with certain things.
4. Promises not kept on deadlines to analyze transcripts - It is supposed to take 24 hours, but it takes much longer. There is no recourse – it just doesn't get accomplished. Students must wait.
5. No response leads to greater frustration. Sometimes students will e-mail/call an instructor and go an entire semester without a response.
6. What is most important is the quality of time spent once the student sees the staff member. Even if students must wait, they are satisfied if the quality of the interaction is high. They are willing to wait for accurate information.

7. The longer the lag in response time, the more frustrated the students become.
8. Part time worker suggested that requiring a student ID would improve service time in assessment center.
9. Prompt service is most important right before a deadline, for example – financial aid. (Student responsibility becomes important)

Students' major complaint is a lack of cross-training, visible when certain employees are absent due to illness, vacation, or professional development and no other employee has the ability to fulfill their duties. Moreover, students are not knowledgeable of what staff can do; they believe a Master Directory in the college catalog may be helpful. In essence, they do not know what they do not know.

Another frustration is the lack of follow-through on promised deadlines. The longer the lag in response time, the higher the frustration level of students. Service should not be promised within a specific time frame if it is impossible for staff to comply. Students admit that the quality of the interaction is more important than the wait time. If students feel a staff member cares, is genuinely concerned about them, and competent at the task at hand, then students feel the wait is worthwhile. Waiting is more of a frustration when a deadline, such as financial aid, is imminent, although students recognize their role in procrastination.

#### **IV. How is student satisfaction related to the staff providing accurate information?**

Employees must be knowledgeable in order to answer students' questions accurately. Furthermore, employees need to know how to elicit information from students in order to provide the correct responses. It is possible to inadvertently provide incorrect information when a question is asked one way versus another.

#### ***Employee Survey Results***

The Library and Assessment Center rank considerably higher than other areas in StA and SoA at 78% and 83% respectively. Other areas rank between 48% and 69%.

The NE category ranges from 9% to 49%. Career Services is ranked at 48% StA and SoA, with 49% NE. In other words, staff who know about Career Services perceive students receive accurate information. Registration and Advising scored 16 – 20 votes each for SoD and StD.

### ***Student Survey Results***

Some students disagree that employees have the knowledge to answer questions accurately: Registration (10%), Counseling (12%), and Advising (15%). For instance, at 15%, 14 students out of 84 marked SoD or StD. Again, other students either are satisfied overall or they have no experience in the area.

### ***Faculty and Staff Focus Group Results***

1. Highly related
2. Could be assisted by Intelligent Search software agent – leads to more accurate information, decreases amount of calls forwarded to individuals, allowing them more time with people in front of them or on the phone with more complicated questions
3. Staff who provide and obtain a direct contact number (cell phone) increase the likelihood of distributing info when contacting students, or vice versa
4. We should not give students the run-around
5. Faculty and staff should be role models on expectations and deadlines (related??)
6. Some student accountability needed
7. Listen carefully; don't make assumptions; ask more questions
8. When dealing with other offices, make personal contact on their behalf to ensure that information will be accurate
9. Faculty – tell students that syllabus dates are tentative, so that when unforeseen events occur, a student doesn't feel the information was inaccurate
10. Follow-up on promises made to students

Faculty and staff would like to see the college district purchase an Intelligent Search Agent for the website, which would greatly assist students by providing them with accurate information. Staff would then be more available to students standing in front of them at counters or those on the phone with more complicated situations. Students would also be less likely to receive the “run-around,” on the phone or in-person.

Faculty and staff agree that they need to ask more questions when interacting with students. By not asking questions, employees make assumptions that may be incorrect. Again, students sometimes do not fully understand what they need, so inaccurate information can be given without anyone realizing it. Another way to maximize the delivery of accurate information is for an employee to make a personal contact with another office on behalf of the student. As a result, the student knows exactly whom to contact for the correct information.

Faculty make specific suggestions for colleagues in the classroom. They feel faculty are role models regarding expectations and deadlines, so they need to be as responsible as they expect students to be and emphasize when changes are made to the syllabus. One faculty member in a small workforce programs states he calls students on their cell phones to ensure personal delivery of pertinent information. Faculty realize they need to follow-up on promises made to students, specifically when stating what will be on exams. When they do not follow through with those promises, students are dissatisfied, feeling they have been provided inaccurate information.

### ***Deans and Directors Focus Group Results***

1. Information is hard to find on the Internet (should be 3 clicks or less)
2. Pertinent information needs to be in places where students will find it (Internet)
3. We need to provide tools up front
4. We need to speak the same language (not education-ese) as students. They don't understand our jargon.
5. There is too much information on the Internet – site cluttered

6. Clear communication between students and staff is important
7. Consistency among staff and departments is important
8. Students are satisfied when you tell them what they want to hear; they are dissatisfied when you tell them what they don't want to hear
9. We should provide exact web locations for students
10. We need to supply students with information
11. Staff members need to educate themselves with general college information
12. Information needs to be distributed to students; they aren't aware

Deans and directors emphasize the ability to locate information on the Internet in three clicks or less as the most important aspect of providing accurate information. Departments should give out specific web locations so students can access information easily. They believe there is a fine balance between providing enough pertinent information and maintaining a clutter-free website.

Deans and directors feel employees need clear communication, which often amounts to speaking the same language as students instead of using educational lingo. They also see the need for information consistency between staff and departments. It is important that all staff provide the same information on any given topic. Furthermore, all employees should have a general knowledge of the college, including where students go for specific information.

Although low on the list of priorities, this group also mentions an important need for Tomball College to supply students with information. Students are not aware of many things.

### ***Student Focus Group Results***

1. Students should be provided with a master directory (add to catalog) so they can be aware of what staff members can do and who can do what services.
2. Staff members need to have a general knowledge of the college to be more resourceful in referring students and knowing who to call about certain situations.



3. Provide FAQs (add to catalog).
4. When given incorrect information, it takes more time to figure out that it was incorrect and what you have to do now.
5. Students are concerned about how the information relates from one campus to another within the district. Sometimes this is a problem. They receive different answers from various campuses.
6. Staff should not be afraid to say “I don’t know” and find someone who does. Staff members need to be resourceful.
7. Students are willing to wait for accurate information.

Students desire a Master Directory and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) included in the printed catalog so they are informed of staff members who can help them with specific needs, such as transcript evaluation. Staff would also benefit because a Master Directory would help them be more resourceful when assisting students.

Students become frustrated when given incorrect information because it takes time to figure out that the information was incorrect and then more time is needed to obtain the correct information. This is a particular concern when obtaining information at one campus and applying that information at another campus. Students claim they receive different answers from different campuses within NHMCCD. Sometimes incorrect information is given because staff do not want to admit they do not know something. Students want staff to admit “I do not know,” and find someone who does.

## **V. How do modern equipment and visually appealing facilities affect satisfaction?**

Visually appealing facilities welcome students to the campus and create a positive atmosphere for everyone. In the ever-increasing technological age, modern equipment is a must. Students demand access to information. It is a disservice to all students, but particularly online students and workforce students if colleges can not provide adequate equipment.

### ***Employee Survey Results***

Respondents ranked Registration at 74% StA and SoA, the highest percentage of the modern equipment category. Advising and Library follow at 69%. The Extended Learning Center and Assessment Center, which are both in the library, score at 65% and 68% respectively. These results are a bit surprising because the library is only 2 years old. The SoD and StD categories in Registration and Advising fall at 14%, with 12% - 17% claiming NE.

It is not surprising that some faculty and staff never become familiar with equipment in Career Services (57%) and Disability Services (51%). It is surprising that some respondents are unfamiliar with the Library (22%), the Assessment Center (25%), and the Extended Learning Center (26%). In fact, one might assume these areas are the highest equipped areas due to the recent construction.

The Assessment Center, which is self contained, ranks the highest in StA and SoA (83%) related to visually appealing facilities, followed by the Library at 80%. The Extended Learning Center, which is in the library, only scored 72%, perhaps because it is not a completely separate entity as is the assessment center. Career Services (55%) and Disability Services (49%) also scored lower than the larger encompassing area of Counseling (71%). This could also be explained by the fact that the areas are not well defined and consist of mainly one office. Apparently, 38% of respondents are not even familiar with the small computer area Career Services entails. It is not surprising that 31% of respondents are unfamiliar with Student Activities because it is mainly a student area.

### ***Student Survey Results***

Students overwhelmingly agree that all areas appear to have modern equipment and visually appealing facilities. The highest amount of disagreement was 10% Advising regarding visually appealing facilities and 9% regarding both areas for Registration.

### ***Faculty and Staff Focus Group Results***

1. Campus needs to look like a college with banners and flyers and such
2. Visual aids made possible by modern equipment help students learn
3. Updated technology attracts students
4. College needs to attempt to keep up with technology – Millennial students expect a lot and are used to multiple stimuli
5. Building and furniture repair/removal important
6. Significant effect on satisfaction
7. College interior needs to match the exterior
8. Critical in order to prepare students for the work force
9. E-mail is out; text messaging is in
10. Important to keep up with the high schools
11. Things in disrepair are not appealing to visitors
12. Modern equipment allows staff to be more productive

Faculty and staff think the campus needs to look like other colleges with prominent banners, flyers, and such. Concerning facilities, faculty and staff feel the interior should match the superior exterior. Walls should be repainted as needed, and furniture in disrepair should be removed, as these are not appealing to visitors and students alike.

This group agrees that updated technology attracts students and is a critical aspect of workforce preparation. The millennial generation expects more than their high schools provide and equivalent services to what other institutions of higher education offer. Modern conveniences, such as voice mail through e-mail and enhanced online e-mail capabilities, results in higher productivity, for staff as well as students.

Faculty and staff applauds the technology available at Tomball College, feeling it has a significant positive effect on satisfaction. They believe the college needs to

progress with the times, communicating with students via text messaging rather than e-mail.

### ***Deans and Directors Focus Group Results***

1. Library and Wellness Center are a huge asset
2. Technology needs to work
3. Learning comes down to the instructor, not technology
4. We need a technological vision so we grow as the field grows
5. We need to make use of the great technology we have
6. Facilities need to be comparable to the community's standards
7. Facilities and amenities need to exceed those of the high schools
8. ((Students choose colleges with the most up-to-date technology and amenities))
9. Implementation time line is needed for technology projects
10. Students have high expectations based on what's available in the real world
11. It's important to retain the personal aspect of relationships rather than always focus on technology
12. Partner with the community in order to have better facilities
13. ((#1 draw – many students have conveniences at home – they want to have comparable at school))
14. Lack of use of technology in Computer classes

Deans and directors view the new library and the Wellness Center as huge assets to students and community members. With students possessing so many conveniences at home, they desire equal or more capabilities on campus. This group expects Tomball College's facilities and amenities to exceed those of the local high schools and be comparable to those of the community. Several people suggested partnering with the community in order to develop better facilities.

Deans and directors are very satisfied with the technology available and feel Tomball College needs to develop a vision and implementation timeline so the college's

capabilities grow as quickly as the technology field. They are more concerned with the proper functioning of technology. Concerning the instructional side of the house, this group believes that learning is more related to the instructor than technology. They think it is still important to retain a personal relationship rather than continually focusing on technology.

### ***Student Focus Group Results***

Visually appealing facilities welcome students to the campus and create a positive atmosphere for everyone. In the ever-increasing technological age, modern equipment is a must. Students demand access to information. It is a disservice to all students, but particularly online students and workforce students if colleges can not provide adequate equipment.

1. Limited to teachers' ability to transfer knowledge to students
2. Important for staff to be willing to use the resources available
3. More textbooks need to be on reserve
4. Update library databases
5. Provide resources in video/DVD format that are required for classes
6. Students are pleased with such a wide variety of teaching tools available
7. Allows staff to be more resourceful
8. Students have no desire for the Stone Age
9. Faculty should share resources and make them available to all sections in a subject area. Students can benefit from other Internet resources teachers provide.
10. The better the campus looks, the more you want to stay.

Students are pleased with the advanced technology and resources available, but feel technology is limited to the instructor's ability to transfer knowledge to them. Equally important is the instructor's willingness to use the resources available. Students suggest faculty share Internet resources with each other and make them available to all sections of a subject area.

Students are quite pleased with Tomball College's facilities (especially the library), stating that "the better the campus looks, the more you want to stay." Students desire more textbooks to be available on a reserve basis in the library. They feel the library databases can be more updated. Students would also like the library to possess video and DVD resources that are required for classes. Interestingly enough, students praise the library the most, but offer the most suggestions for it as well. Perhaps it is a case of the Millennial (Robert, 2007) mind frame. Millennials are accustomed to the latest and greatest technology, with instant results. Not afraid of change, they seek out institutions that can provide the most for the money.

#### **VI. How do offices and policies demonstrate having the students' best interest at heart?**

It is important to know if Tomball really does have the students' best interest at heart. After all, without students, there would be no need for a college.

##### ***Employee Survey Results***

Registration ranks the highest in StA and SoA at 77%. The lowest ranking area is Career Services (48%), although 46% voted NE, similar to other categories. Minimal disagreement is common across all areas except Advising, at 15% of SoD and StD. Oddly enough, Student Activities only ranked at 60% StA and SoA, perhaps highlighting some division between faculty and staff.

##### ***Student Survey Results***

Registration, Advising, Assessment Center, and Library lead this category in agreement with 79%, 76%, 71%, and 71%, respectively. Other areas including Disability Services, Career Services, Extended Learning Center, Financial Aid, and Assessment Center had zero to two students disagree. Again, a large number of students report NE in this category.

### ***Faculty and Staff Focus Group Results***

1. Staff make a call to let other department know that student is on his/her way
2. Willingness to meet students outside office hours (fac & staff)
3. Willingness to accommodate students' needs (children out of school)
4. Posted office hours
5. We provide call center
6. Adjuncts meet students in ELC, not in office

Several staff members make it a habit to call other departments before sending a student in order to increase the likelihood that the student will follow through. Staff are also able to apprise the other department of the student's needs, which decreases repetition and potential confusion. Faculty and staff accommodate students' needs to meet outside office or business hours.

Tomball College provides a call center, which ensures the employee's attention is focused completely on the caller. Call center staff answer general questions and route calls to specific people or departments when necessary, lessening the run-around for students.

Math faculty tutor in the Math Lab during office hours, which allows them to see problems students experience while completing assignments. Students are less intimidated in the Math Lab, where others are also seeking help, rather than a faculty member's office. Adjuncts also meet their students in the Extended Learning Center, partially due to limited office space and lack of confidentiality therein.

### ***Deans and Directors Focus Group Results***

1. Staff are visible; students feel they can approach them
2. We attempt to hire people who are customer service oriented
3. We have an open door policy
4. Employees go above-and-beyond in the Student Development Division
5. We hire people with a passion for students and education

6. We are actively engaged with students

This group boasts on staff visibility around campus, leading students to feel they are approachable. Hiring managers make a concerted effort to hire people who are customer service oriented as well as those who have a passion for education and students.

Many staff have an open-door policy, not requiring an appointment, although in some cases an appointment ensures the student quality time. A student can often approach a staff member at any time to request assistance with problem resolution or to provide them a progress check – an example of employees going above-and-beyond. Deans and directors alike feel they are actively engaged with students, which keeps the students' best interest at heart.

***Student Focus Group Results***

1. Clubs can use school facilities to meet

Students experienced difficulty with this section, finding only one example of how the college demonstrates having the students' best interest at heart: clubs are allowed to use school facilities to meet.

**VII. What changes could be made for students to feel that offices and policies have their best interest at heart?**

This question is in direct response to the previous question and does not correspond to the electronic survey. Satisfaction results when people know they have a voice. Each group details improvements to show that Tomball does have the students' best interest at heart. Leaders are not always aware of how policies, procedures, and practices are interpreted by students, much less how they can be changed for the better.

***Faculty and Staff Focus Group Results***

1. Staff should have a genuine concern for the student
2. Longer office hours at WC (nights)
3. Stop and focus on the student at all times



4. Keep office hours
5. Adjuncts need offices in order to hold office hours and to allow more privacy/confidentiality with students

Staff should have a genuine concern for the student. One way to exhibit concern is to stop working and focus on the student at all times. Another change recommended is to lengthen the night-time office hours, including the Willow Chase campus. Faculty specifically recommend that office hours be maintained. Additionally, adjunct faculty need offices in order to have the capacity to hold office hours and to allow more privacy when meeting with students.

### ***Deans and Directors Focus Group Results***

1. Provide Disney customer service training
2. Include students on committees
3. Ask students what they need and want
4. Be more responsive to students' needs
5. All employees need to be able to attend training
6. Add new workforce programs
7. Make scheduling additions
8. Students are not always greeted immediately on phone or in person
9. Add mystery shopper

Deans and directors recommend providing Disney customer service training, world-renowned for being a stellar program. They also feel students should be represented on more committees, allowing them to voice their needs and wants. In essence, deans and directors desire Tomball College to be more responsive to students (on the phone or in person) and their needs. Furthermore, this group emphasizes the importance of requiring all employees to attend training. Part of the customer satisfaction idea includes adding a Mystery Shopper program.

Other suggestions include an expansion of available workforce programs, although some participants believe that we should focus more on the general college population because workforce programs are so limited in enrollment. In that vein, day and night scheduling additions are suggested as it is difficult to create student-friendly schedules.

### ***Student Focus Group Results***

1. Provide schedules that are more student-friendly. It is difficult to schedule 12 hours a semester, resulting in a longer time to degree
2. Faculty, staff, and administration should have a greater visual presence on campus. Students see that they care to be involved in students' lives. They appreciate the staff getting to know them.
3. Faculty suites are intimidating. There is no privacy because doors are left open so everyone on the hall can hear what is going on.
4. Faculty can ask students to complete questionnaires at the beginning of the semester so they can get to know students better. Faculty should find out if students are repeating the class or attempting it for a 2nd or 3rd time so they can offer more support to those students.
5. Change that students must pay out of district fees for taking a class 3 times.
6. Provide extra study support when a student enrolls in a class for the 3rd time.
7. Counselors should notify instructors when a student is taking a class for the 2nd or 3rd time so they can provide additional support.
8. Students who have not enrolled recently have difficulty accessing personal records in My Records. They must call Service Desk for support.
9. Part-time workers need individual listing of faculty schedules so they can provide better service to students.
10. Introduce more Supplemental Instructors
11. More signage is needed! It is difficult to find things as well as give directions.

12. Staff members who have a long commute can't always put students first.
13. Limited availability of certain classes, such as Trigonometry. Students only have one opportunity, and it doesn't fit their schedule, they must travel to another campus.

The researcher originally asked about positive ideas, but students really focused on changes that needed to be made.

First and foremost, students suggest a more student-friendly schedule as it is difficult to schedule 12 hours per semester on the Tomball campus, resulting in a longer time to degree or required travel between campuses. Secondly, students believe it is important for all employees to have a greater visual presence on campus, showing that they care enough to be involved with student activities and everyday campus life. They suggest faculty collect questionnaires on the first day in order to facilitate the "getting to know you" practice. Such questionnaires alert faculty to those attempting the class for a second or third time. Students offer another option - for counselors to notify faculty of a second or third attempt. Students suggest the addition of more supplemental instructors and more awareness of free tutoring for those repeating a class for the third time.

Students feel the newly added faculty suites are intimidating. Students are embarrassed when visiting professors in their offices because of the lack of confidentiality. Doors are left open and anyone down the hall can hear the conversation. Other suggestions include:

- Eliminate out-of-district fees when attempting a class for the third time

- Improve Signage

- Provide student workers individual faculty schedules

- Provide extended hours

- Improve My Records eliminating students' need to contact the Service Desk

## **VIII. Advising**

The advising section addresses three areas: what Tomball is doing well, what Tomball should be doing, and what improvements Tomball can make. The researcher included this section due to high levels of agreement in dissatisfaction on part of the students and staff that completed the electronic survey. To address the department in its entirety, charts were compiled for Advising summarizing each question in the survey. Students' main concern is providing services correctly the first time. Employees do not feel colleagues instill confidence that services will be provided correctly because they do not believe employees possess the knowledge to provide services accurately. Employees also feel that service is not prompt, and staff are too busy to assist students. Students are more favorable of Advising than employees.

### ***What is Tomball doing well?***

#### ***Faculty and Staff Focus Group Results***

1. Provides 1 – 1 attention
2. New Student Advisor computer lab
3. Restaurant coasters
4. Advisors call department offices to get accurate information
5. Accuracy for degree plans
6. Students know advisors by name
7. We provide faster service than other colleges and universities

Faculty and staff don compliments to Tomball's advising area, believing they provide one-on-one attention, with many students recognizing advisors by name. Tomball also provides faster service than other colleges as reported by students to staff. Furthermore, a newly implemented "New Student Advisor" computer lab is available so first-time students receive individualized attention by an experienced advisor. Returning students benefit from a restaurant-style coaster system, eliminating time spent standing *en*

*queue.* Students walk around campus or make themselves comfortable in the Commons area while waiting to see an advisor. Departments report that advisors call their offices to ensure accurate information is disseminated to students. Additionally, there is a high prevalence of degree plan accuracy.

### ***Deans and Directors Focus Group Results***

1. Restaurant-style system – students don't have to wait in line
2. Quality time spent with students
3. We care about students
4. Superior customer service
5. No 2-3 hour wait
6. Provide Advising Conference
7. Provide accurate information

Deans and directors boast that students do not wait in line, thanks to the restaurant-style coaster system. Even though students are comfortable, they are not forced to wait for lengthy two and three hour periods. This group is proud of the quality time advisors spend with students, showing they care as much about the student as they do about providing accurate information and superior customer service. Deans and directors feel that an annual advising conference is partially responsible for the high level of professionalism in the department.

### ***Student Focus Group Results***

1. My Records is great
2. Catalog is accessible online

Students, surprisingly, do not have a lot to say during this section of the focus group. They think My Records is great because they can verify and obtain information online without making a trip to campus or waiting in line. They also appreciate that the catalog is available online.

### ***What should Tomball be doing?***

#### ***Faculty and Staff Focus Group Results***

1. Faculty advising
2. More use of transfer guides
3. Longer hours

This group believes Tomball should practice more faculty advising. This would familiarize students with faculty in the department as well as involve faculty in the long term goals of their students. Faculty advising lends itself to more accurate advising. They would like the college to be using transfer guides to a greater extent. So many questions arise about transferring, yet only two four-year university transfer guides are available for use by advisors. Finally, longer hours are desired for advising to take place.

#### ***Deans and Directors Focus Group Results***

1. Separate advising and registration
2. Build a new facility
3. More confidentiality and privacy needed
4. Faculty advising model needed

First and foremost, this group believes advising and registration should be two separate entities. Thinking large, deans and directors desire a new facility – one that provides more space so that privacy and confidentiality can be respected. Faculty advising is also suggested.

#### ***Student Focus Group Results***

1. Personal attention versus redirecting students to Internet (impersonal) resources -  
Returning students still need help
2. 4-year transfer – advisors should know what transfers and what doesn't - Direct  
students to the correct Internet page that does provide transfer info - More transfer  
guides are needed

3. Ensure that catalogs are up-to-date with instructor info; Online catalog is up-to-date, but some people prefer a hand-held catalog.

Students desire more personal attention rather than redirection to impersonal resources, such as the Internet. They emphasize that returning students need help. Students believe advisors should know more about what transfers to other schools. At least one participant is also a student worker and told other students about a specific Internet page that does provide the desired transfer information. Another student worker states that more transfer guides are needed.

Another major concern is for the catalog to list instructor information. Although the online catalog is always up-to-date, some people prefer to flip through a printed catalog rather than maneuver through the online version.

#### ***What does Tomball need to improve?***

#### ***Faculty and Staff Focus Group Results***

1. Market advising abilities during non-peak times, including “Advising Month”
2. Reconfigure advising space – more privacy needed
3. Advisors in the commons would make them more accessible to students

Faculty and staff would like increased marketing of advising during non-peak times. October is now known by staff as “Advising Month,” but it is not evident that students are aware. One idea is to place advisors in the Commons so they are more visible. Also, students may feel more comfortable sitting at a table in the Commons than at a desk in a relatively small area. The last improvement suggested is for the current space to be reconfigured to allow for more privacy.

#### ***Deans and Directors Focus Group Results***

1. More staff needed
2. Getting the information from Divisions to advisors

3. Separate processes (when registration is updated, advisors don't need to spend their time doing these things – takes away from advising responsibilities)
4. Developmental model of advising versus prescriptive
5. Purging system needs to be improved
6. Process of registration and payment
7. Further development of My Education plan

The first improvement suggests more staff be added. Next, improvement in the flow of information from individual divisions to advisors would assist in providing students with the most accurate information. Additionally, advisors should be concerned solely with advising, but because of the set-up they must tend to other responsibilities as well. This could be improved by separating the registration and advising processes.

A major improvement would be a shift from Prescriptive Advising, where a student follows a specific plan or degree program, to Developmental Advising, in which the whole student is considered and a life – work – school balance is reached.

Other suggestions include an overhaul of the purging system. Approximately 1,000 students are dropped for non-payment two – three days before classes begin each semester, requiring them to re-register. Further development and mandate of My Education Plan would also increase benefits to students, who could set up a long-term plan with an advisor early on. Students are more concerned with registering for classes than advising. Deans and directors do not believe students see the importance of advising, which is essentially, thinking about the future.

### ***Student Focus Group Results***

1. Advisors should be more informed and pass that on to students - Students should not be overwhelmed in any semester
2. Advisors need to be aware of specific program demands
3. Better communication in all directions: Staff – Staff, Staff - Students, Across Divisions



4. Department chairs, deans, and faculty should be more visible and help with advising
5. Advise students to complete basic classes before entering specific programs. Inexperienced students are overwhelmed and more likely to fail when they enter a program without taking the basics first. They could improve their study skills and become better students before taking difficult classes like A & P, and they would be more likely to succeed.

Students feel advisors need to be better informed of specific program demands. Some students are overwhelmed by too many reading classes or too many challenging classes in any one semester and feel advisors should caution students more. They feel advising would improve if department chairs, deans, and faculty were more visible and assisted with advising.

Students believe that communication in all directions needs to be improved. Departmental staff need to communicate better with each other as well as students. Staff also need to communicate with other staff in various departments and divisions in order for students to be better served. Students believe improved communication will lead to fewer students being misadvised or ill-advised.

Students also feel they should be advised to complete basic classes before entering specific workforce programs. Inexperienced students are more likely to become overwhelmed and more likely to fail without taking the basics first. They feel students can improve study skills and become better students before taking difficult classes like Anatomy and Physiology. Finally, participants desire increased staffing and/or extended hours to decrease wait time.

## **IX. Registration**

The registration section addresses three areas: what Tomball is doing well, what Tomball should be doing, and what improvements Tomball can make. The researcher included this section due to high levels of agreement in dissatisfaction on part of the

students and staff that completed the electronic survey. To address the department in its entirety, charts were compiled for Registration summarizing each question in the survey. Overall, students are satisfied with Registration. Employees voice concerns with prompt service, possessing the correct knowledge to provide services accurately the first time, and with staff acting too busy to respond to students' requests. Even though students are satisfied overall, 10% - 12% of students also voice concerns with these categories. Employees perceive the dissatisfaction to be higher than it really is.

***What is Tomball doing well?***

***Faculty and Staff Focus Group Results***

1. Online registration
2. Availability of classes (faculty)

Faculty and staff feel that online registration is the best thing Tomball currently practices. Faculty feel that the availability of classes is great, but at least one staff member dissented on this suggestion.

***Deans and Directors Focus Group Results***

1. We provide various options (phone, online, in person)
2. Students complete registration by themselves
3. Online registration is going well

Deans and directors believe providing various options to register, by phone, online, and in person, is the best thing Tomball currently practices. Some participants feel students' completing the registration process by themselves is preparing them for further experience at the university level. Former practices include advisors completing the registration process for students. Finally, deans and directors endorse the online registration system, believing it is productive and beneficial to students.

***Student Focus Group Results***

1. Phone registration is great.

2. Helpful online information.
3. Specific programs offer speedier registration by form – no waiting.

Students love phone registration. They use the Internet to retrieve helpful information online, but they prefer telephone registration. Several students feel Tomball has made progress in some workforce programs because it is possible to register for the following semester by completing a form instead of waiting in lines.

***What should Tomball be doing?***

***Faculty and Staff Focus Group Results***

1. Registration period is very long ??? Should we change this???
2. Do students take this for granted?

Faculty and staff question the length of the registration period – wondering if it is too long. That is, do students take it for granted? Faculty and staff do not have any answers, but they feel the question is worth investigating.

***Deans and Directors Focus Group Results***

1. Educating students on the process and the difference between registration and advising
2. Targeted registration (including late registration and penalty fees)
3. Give students program degree information

Deans and directors think employees need to educate students better on the process and the difference between registration and advising. They would like to see targeted registration, when students are slated to register during specific times. With targeted registration comes late registration and applicable penalty fees. This idea is similar to faculty and staff's suggestion that students take the registration period for granted. A final idea this group mentions is that students should be receiving program degree information.

### ***Student Focus Group Results***

1. More communication needed to the students
2. Offer graduation evaluations to students

Students would like to see more communication on the registration process, on deadlines, and when classes are cancelled. At least one student worker states that students are not aware of the ability to obtain a graduation evaluation. She feels this would benefit a lot of students.

### ***What does Tomball need to improve?***

### ***Faculty and Staff Focus Group Results***

1. Students can't get the schedule they need

The only thing faculty and staff mention during this section is that part-time night students as well as full-time day students cannot create a schedule to fit their needs.

### ***Deans and Directors Focus Group Results***

1. Technology needs to work
2. Class cancellation and notification (impacts financial aid and other factors)
3. We need our own registration computer lab
4. Printed schedule not up-to-date
5. We waste money on printed schedules; we throw out each semester

Deans and directors are concerned with how well technology functions. The past year has been filled with several instances of technological incapacitation. Class cancellation and notification also needs to be improved, as financial aid and other factors are affected. Apparently, some students are not aware of a class cancellation until they arrive for the first class. Deans and directors feel a Registration Computer Lab would be beneficial because employees could monitor students and assist when necessary. Finally, the printed schedule was discussed again. Participants feel it is a waste of money because it is not up-to-date and an excessive number of schedules are discarded each semester.

### ***Student Focus Group Results***

1. More communication to students to register early
2. Individual time and attention
3. Faster and more thorough – less wait-time
4. Extended hours

Several people agree that more communication to students is needed about registering early. Participants feel that more individual time and attention is needed during the registration process.

### **X. Where do students get information about services offered?**

This question is important because employees need to know how students find out about services offered. Tomball enforces a “no banners” policy, which has been controversial in the past. There are other methods of “advertising,” such as posting dated notices outside each classroom, placing table tents around campus, and sending e-mails to the student body. Student attendance has declined at certain events around campus over the past few years. There are even instances when no students will attend an event sponsored at lunch. It is difficult to differentiate why students are not participating, so hopefully this question will shed some light on potential solutions.

### ***Employee Survey Results***

An important aspect of the employee survey is that high percentages of employees are unfamiliar with student services:

<b>Department</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
Registration	3	7.32
Advising	6	14.63
Financial Aid	10	24.39
Counseling	9	21.95
Career Services	27	65.85
Disability Services	24	58.54
Assessment Center	5	12.20
24 Respondents skipped	41 Responses Total	

If employees are unfamiliar with student services, then a major link to the students is missing.

### ***Student Survey Results***

Students are not familiar with student services. If Tomball can figure out where students obtain information, then employees could maximize their efforts, not wasting time, money, and energy on other modes of communication.

<b>Department</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
Registration	2	2.53
Advising	9	11.39
Financial Aid	35	44.30
Counseling	34	43.04
Career Services	49	62.03
Disability Services	62	78.48
Assessment Center	19	24.05
Library	8	10.13
Extended Learning Center	44	55.70
Student Activities	36	45.57
5 Respondents skipped	79 Responses Total	

### ***Faculty and Staff Focus Group Results***

1. Word of mouth, which is not necessarily good because the information may be incorrect
2. TVs in Commons
3. Catalog

Faculty and staff think students receive their information by word-of-mouth, which they believe is problematic. Some information must be individualized. What is correct for one student may be incorrect for another student. Another popular way to obtain information is from the televisions placed in the Commons. Students are often “hanging out” in the Commons in between classes and TVs offer large visuals and quick messages. Lastly, faculty and staff think the catalog is the next likely place students turn for information. Catalogs are always available in the Commons, and employees often refer to them for information.

### ***Deans and Directors Focus Group Results***

1. Website
2. Orientation
3. Advisors
4. Catalogs
5. New Student Advisors
6. Signs
7. Faculty
8. Table tents
9. Bathroom Stalls
10. Poster Racks
11. Word of Mouth

Deans and directors think students receive their information from the Internet – Tomball’s website, to be exact. Students are always surfing the Web for personal reasons, and the Internet tends to be quicker and less of a hassle than visiting an office or looking up a phone number to call an office. The second most popular place students receive their information is from Student Orientation, although the 2006 – 2007 academic year was the first face-to-face orientation offered in recent history.



Deans and directors believe students receive a lot of information from advisors (including the New Student Advisor) as well as the catalog. Students often stop in with a quick question to talk to an advisor. Student workers often refer students to the catalog because they are available directly next to Advising. Results are that students do not wait and advisors are allowed quality time with the students they do see. Students also obtain information from other sources: signs on classrooms, faculty announcements, table tents, bathroom stall flyers, poster racks, and word-of-mouth.

### ***Student Focus Group Results***

1. Bathroom stalls
2. Posters
3. Pop ups on the Internet
4. Event T Shirts
5. TVs in Commons
6. Classroom Bulletins

Students obtain information through the bathroom stall advertising – “because you have to go in there.” They also pay attention to the poster racks around campus. Students are aware the posters contain information about student activities, so they read them. Students are on the Internet a lot; they say that the pop-ups catch their attention.

Another way students realize that an event is occurring is the Event Today t-shirts employees and students wear. Unfortunately, that is last minute and students may not be able to attend. Perhaps Event Tomorrow t-shirts should be designed! Students “hang out” in the Commons, so they obtain information from the TVs, announcements geared to various audiences. Finally, students say classroom bulletins are another avenue to find out about campus services and events.

## **XI. What can Tomball do to increase awareness?**

This section is not associated with any survey question in particular, although it is important because the three groups possess different ideas about how information is obtained. Each group possesses the capacity to make suggestions and potentially offer creative solutions.

### ***Faculty and Staff Focus Group Results***

1. Provide mandatory orientation
2. Location of events needs to be more centralized, not in N-103
3. Create more signs
4. Increase visual appeal of signs
5. TVs in areas other than the Commons
6. More electronic marquees around campus where students congregate
7. More faculty/staff visibility
8. Host a My Space page for Tomball College
9. Monthly time in Commons for clubs, departments so that students have a continual opportunity to find out about what TC has to offer

Faculty ignite a major discussion on mandatory student orientation as the primary mode of awareness. They emphasize that universities require orientation, and they do not understand why Tomball differs. Another suggestion is to centralize events in the Commons instead of the student activity room adjacent to the Commons. Faculty and staff feel students do not venture into N - 103 because it is isolated. They believe more latitude on visually appealing banners and signs would make a positive impact on making students aware of services and events. Perhaps students would attend more events in the student activity room if they were more aware.

Time was limited due to the intense discussion on mandatory orientation, but faculty and staff listed several other items they feel would improve awareness:

- TVs, similar to those in the Commons, around campus

- More electronic marquees where students congregate
- Higher visibility of faculty and staff
- Host a My Space page for Tomball College
- Monthly Commons appearances by clubs and departments

### ***Deans and Directors Focus Group Results***

1. Banners for registration and other events
2. Automatically connect a student's personal e-mail to district e-mail address
3. Banners in Commons on event day
4. Increase community marketing by PR office
5. Add My Space page for TC
6. Need more electronic signs
7. Research new communication technology tools
8. Internal Marketing by PR office
9. Podcasting
10. ((Students hold partial responsibility for being connected – It's a choice))

Deans and directors feel banners advertising registration and other events would increase awareness – not only for students, but also for the community. Deans and directors point out that a student can currently opt for the NHMCCD e-mail host to forward mail to a personal account, but too few students are aware of the option. If the District system completed this process automatically, then more students would actually be aware of Tomball's processes and events. When students are connected by e-mail, they feel part of a community.

Deans and directors desire to see an increase in internal and external marketing by the Community Relations department. Additionally, they would like the college to host a My Space page. Other means of communicating with students could be with more electronic marquees or signs as well as podcasting.

### ***Student Focus Group Results***

1. Faculty should make announcements
2. Institute an Information Desk
3. Place TVs throughout the campus
4. More staff and faculty recruiting at the high schools
5. Attend pep rallies at the high schools
6. More communication needed with the high schools (esp registration)
7. Provide more community events (similar to Winter Wonderland) – Haunted House, etc...
8. Change the fact that students don't care – school and work are difficult to manage
9. Add dormitories so students are in more of a community

Students suggest on-campus and off-campus improvements in advertising. They would like faculty to make announcements at the beginning or end of classes. They also see the need to institute an Information Desk and place more TVs around the campus.

Externally, students see a great need for more of a Tomball presence at the high schools, even at pep rallies. High school students need more information about registration and clubs so they can register early and get involved as soon as they step on campus. Students also feel that more community-wide events, such as Winter Wonderland, should be offered. Many students in the focus group are connected to the college through clubs, student government, and part-time work. They are aware of how Tomball opens each academic year with events such as the Learning Fair (academic and support resources) and Activities Mart (clubs and organizations recruit students), yet still feel more can be accomplished before students leave high school.

Students point out a fundamental problem with peers – they do not care. The majority of students does not attend events or participate in any way. One such student speaks up in the group, stating it is difficult to manage work and school; she does not have time to be involved.

## **XII. What other suggestions do you have to improve student services at TC?**

### ***Faculty and Staff Focus Group Results***

1. Need student center
2. Improve catalog
3. Add to marketing on current TVs

### ***Deans and Directors Focus Group Results***

1. We need more resources – student services building
2. We need a VP of Student Development
3. Find ways to collaborate with academic side (make a commitment)
4. FT Financial Aid staff member at WC
5. FT Student Activities staff member at WC
6. PT Student Activities staff member at WC
7. Recognition of Student Development's importance to student success
8. More staff
9. We need an advocate

### ***Student Focus Group Results***

1. Students should be assigned to a team of support (advisor, counselor, learning support, faculty) like at Texas State
2. Link computer files to pictures of student (PT employees)
3. Provide more efficient network services (bandwidth speed, prevent overloaded system problems)
4. Provide more reliable technology – phones/computers all tied together. When one is down, so are the others.
5. Provide more integrated programs. PT employees in advising must open 3 different screens for each student.

6. Treat students as a person, not a number.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **SUMMARY**

The purpose of this study was to determine student satisfaction at Tomball College. Furthermore, the researcher sought opinions of employees as to their perception of student satisfaction. Gaps were analyzed and recommendations to Tomball College will be offered. Recommendations for future research will also be made. Research questions studied were:

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

#### **Research Question 1**

How satisfied are students with student services at Tomball College?

#### **Research Question 2**

How satisfied do employees perceive students to be with student services at Tomball College?

#### ***Willingness to Help***

Students are more concerned about the relationship with staff than the actual business being conducted. They want opportunities to interact with staff outside of the classroom and the realm of “academia.” Students feel if staff know them on a more personal level, staff will be more likely to attend to their needs on an individual basis. Students want staff to be genuinely interested in their needs.

Instead of relationships and getting to know the students, faculty and staff focus on direct service, including giving students their full attention, calling students by name, and going the extra mile to help. Faculty who participated in the focus group agreed with students that being involved in student activities is important. Other staff members were more concerned about the ability to be resourceful and direct students to another part of

the college if necessary. In essence, some employees forsake personal relationships for service delivery.

Deans' and directors' ideas encompass those presented by the other two groups. They extend their ideas to an even higher level; desiring the full package: great customer service, communication across divisions to benefit students, and communication with individuals and groups of students to get to know their needs. These ideas need to be shared by faculty and staff because they are the student's first contact.

Several obstacles to "willingness to help" exist, and all groups agree staff are too busy to help, displayed in the form of impatience or unavailability. There also seems to be agreement that a lack of general college knowledge by various staff poses a problem. Faculty and staff suggest information booths around campus to assist students. Students did not mention problems with technology as an obstacle, yet the other two groups emphasized this problem. Perhaps students are not as inconvenienced as employees feel they are when turned away. Students feel improved visibility of staff would allow them greater opportunities to interact and potentially solve problems or ask questions.

The greatest obstacle for students is the lack of cross-training, which is not mentioned by deans and directors. Several staff members emphasize this problem, probably due to the fact that they must face the student when denying service or hear complaints upon returning from a personal absence.

### ***Accurate Information***

Student satisfaction is highly related to the staff providing accurate information. Students were not shy to make suggestions as to how satisfaction can be improved. They feel the college relies too heavily on employees providing information, when the college could distribute the same information in printed format.

All groups agree students are not well informed, which could be ameliorated by requiring a mandatory orientation and/or providing a Master Directory of personnel and



responsibilities. Student responsibility is a recurring topic of conversation within the employee groups, but could be better facilitated by making some of these changes.

Deans and directors feel information should be easily accessible on the Internet. They believe the web site may be too cluttered or difficult to maneuver, which could lead students to request information in printed form. Staff suggested the use of an online Intelligent Search Agent, which could merge two needs: the ability to provide and retrieve accurate information. The college would need to market the use of the Internet more, but it would likely lessen the run-around students experience. Improved training of personnel would also improve the delivery of accurate information to students. Thus, well-trained employees will be much more resourceful and better equipped to handle student needs.

### ***Modern Equipment and Visually Appealing Facilities***

All groups agree that Tomball's technological capacity is stellar. Each group possesses unique concerns depending on its perspective: faculty and staff are concerned about contacting students; deans and directors are concerned with the overall technology vision; and students are concerned about classroom resources and research capabilities. Although the library is one of the newest buildings on campus, students are more concerned about the library's resources. Furthermore, the college entered into a partnership with the Harris County Public Library System, which widened borrowing and research capabilities. Perhaps the group succumbed to what Fontana and Frey (2000) call "groupthink," with students feeding off of others' complaints about the library. Another possible explanation is that students are not aware of the rich expanse of resources available through the public library partnership.

Students are not as concerned as staff regarding the visually appealing factor of Tomball College. Someone suggested that staff work in the building for longer periods than most students occupy the space, so perhaps they notice the flaws more. Employees mention the need for facilities to be comparable to the local high schools and community,

but students did not mention anything similar. Students may attend other campuses within the NHMCCD district and believe Tomball's facilities to be comparable or better, thus possessing no reason to complain.

### ***Changes Regarding Students' Best Interest***

Students again provide insight to their perspective; they desire a more student-friendly schedule, with additional support for multiple attempts in one course. Deans and directors focus more on customer service because they oversee the managerial aspect of their areas. Students never mention customer service. In fact, they desire the technological aspect of My Records to be so automated, they do not have to contact a live person!

Faculty and staff suggest additional hours as did the students, but the former do not begin to broach all the changes the latter suggest. These findings magnify the importance of asking students their opinions instead of making assumptions.

### ***Advising: What Tomball is doing well***

Employees hold advising in high regard; however, students disagree. Intended to allow students to wait comfortably around campus the coaster system may be taken for granted because they are used at many restaurants. Students do not mention the coasters, although employees believe this system to be outstanding. Students may not realize other college students experience longer wait times and actual lines.

Employees list degree plan accuracy as a positive aspect of advising, but students do not list it at all, possibly being unaware of this issue until degree completion. Similarly, this group of students is not necessarily new to Tomball and may not have experienced the newly formed "New Student Advisor" position, which faculty and staff rates as the second best attribute about advising.

***Advising: What Tomball should be doing***

Employees would like to see Tomball adopt a faculty advising model. Students never mention faculty advising, potentially due to unfamiliarity with the topic. The researcher is aware of faculty advising related to math placement as well as informal advising that likely takes place between students and faculty. Workforce programs are much more involved in faculty advising compared to general academic areas.

Faculty and staff boasted about personal and quality advising, but students voiced a desire for more personal attention to returning students, evidence of a gap in satisfaction and perception. Since the “New Student Advisor” position was created this past year, these concerns now have an opportunity to surface. Now, Tomball can investigate how to improve service for returning students.

***Advising: What Tomball needs to improve***

Groups 2 and 3 stated improved communication is a need: division to division, staff to staff, staff to students. Perhaps surprisingly, faculty and staff did not list this as a necessary improvement. It is possible faculty are not participants in discussions involving advising concerns. Staff in advising may be too close to the situation to realize communication is a problem, and staff outside of advising would not have many opportunities to make them aware. Deans and directors, on the other hand, deal with complaints from students and understand the problems.

Deans and directors offered other suggestions hinting that more philosophical and process related discussions need to be initiated, such as with My Education Plan, Developmental Advising, and the separation of advising and registration.

Following along the same lines of Developmental Advising, students stated they want to be advised to the reality of the coursework they attempt in a semester. Students do not want to be overwhelmed in any semester. Students believe they should complete basic courses before entering workforce programs or attempting difficult courses such as Anatomy and Physiology so study skills can be developed.

### ***Registration:***

Each group's concerns are related. Students believed more communication is needed about registering early, which might substantiate faculty and staff opinions that the registration period is too long. Perhaps students take the lengthy period for granted and wait until peak times to register, although it may be related to payment deadlines, when decisions are made about what classes will be offered, and what faculty members will teach specific courses. Deans and directors stated they desire targeted registration to avoid the current system's chaos.

### ***Suggestions to Increase Awareness***

It can not be ignored how strongly faculty and staff feel about mandatory orientation. There was some dissension within the group, and when certain people object that anything mandatory is a barrier, some faculty members begin making concessions, stating that even a 10 – minute orientation would be better than nothing, which is not a solution because a brief orientation is currently available online and required before placement testing. Obviously, it is not adequate.

Faculty and staff discussed benefits of employees talking face-to-face with people and making them feel welcome. What would be necessary, as seen by the researcher, would be for faculty and staff to be involved in orientation.

Employees believed e-mail is outdated and text messaging is now the best way to connect to students. Interestingly enough, students do not mention this at all. Students expressed a desire for more faculty involvement, in alignment with faculty and staff suggestions of higher employee visibility at campus events in order to increase student awareness.

This section benefits from the variety between each focus group because various perspectives are represented. Participants in the Faculty/Staff group and the Student group were able to show others a different perspective during the discussions. Even as

employees, everyone is not aware of the essential functions and complexities involved with colleagues' work.

### **Research Question 3**

What gaps, if any, exist between what students and employees report regarding satisfaction?

The researcher expected large gaps between students' opinions and employees' perceptions. Several gaps were identified, but not the extent the researcher anticipated. In fact, employees were more critical than students, an unexpected outcome.

Employees listed six examples each of how offices and policies have the students' best interest at heart, but students could only think of one example. Student survey results showed high agreement (71% - 79%) or high percentages of No Experience in this area, but the focus group results were significantly different. Perhaps students' attention is more easily drawn to bad experiences, taking the good ones for granted. If everything employees claim is a reality, perhaps students benefit without realizing it. Obviously, student perspectives form only on issues that directly affect them. For instance, if Tomball did not practice an open-door policy students would be affected negatively. Since most employees practice an open door policy, students do not notice.

Students believe a greater visual presence on campus by all levels of employees is needed to prove offices and policies have the students' best interest at heart. Students feel staff care when seen around campus. Deans and directors feel staff visibility on campus is the best Tomball offers to ensure offices and policies demonstrate having the students' best interest at heart. Perhaps the missing link is Group 1 (faculty and staff), which did not mention anything about visibility on campus. Perhaps deans and directors are quite visible, but faculty and staff are too busy doing their job and preparing for classes.

Students favor Advising more than employees perceive, although they offered few examples in the focus group of what Tomball does well in this area. This may be

another example of students not noticing that which runs well; students may take it for granted. In fact, students mentioned the benefits of My Records and the online catalog, even though the Internet did not make the list of how students obtain information about student services. Students specifically complained Advising often refers them to online sources instead of taking care of the question face-to-face. Additionally, students admit they like online information to help them register, but they prefer phone registration.

Another gap is represented by how students obtain information. It is important to mention this question encompassed more than expected: general information about college processes and systems (registration and advising) as well as student activity information. Interestingly enough, faculty and staff believe word-of-mouth is the primary method of information transfer, but it is last on the list for deans and directors. Students never mentioned word-of-mouth at all. Additionally, the first half of the deans and directors list is not mentioned by the other two groups. The bottom half of their list is much closer to what students say. The deans and directors previously mention information on the Internet should be attainable in three clicks or less, and perhaps this is why a generation of Internet-surfers is not relying on Tomball's Website.

Students learn more about Tomball from the TV monitors in the Commons. Even though that item is lower on the list of where students obtain information, they admit the announcements target a wide group of interests, which catches their attention. Students also rate Internet pop ups high, which cover general college information, such as advising deadlines and tutoring hours. These results highlight once again that each group is thinking differently.

One potential cause for this misalignment in thinking may be attributed to the fact that if other methods of communication were allowed, such as banners and My Space pages, students would be more likely to know about what is going on around campus. For instance, the bathroom stall advertising is "hit and miss;" it depends on how many events are occurring as well as location of the flyers. Pop-ups on the Internet are the

same; it depends if you are on the computers in the library, the Extended Learning Center, the Commons, or the computer lab. If students do not visit a particular area, they are not likely to see pop-ups related to that area.

### ***Gaps between Survey Results and Focus Groups***

Survey results show a majority of students agree staff members never act too busy to respond to their requests. The highest disagreement came in Registration (14%) and Advising (17%), ranging from 12 – 14 students. Interestingly enough, this is the greatest obstacle named by participants in the student focus group.

When students were asked in the electronic survey if Tomball's offices and policies had the students' best interest at heart, they responded positively. During the student focus group, participants stated only one example of how Tomball has the students' best interest at heart: clubs can use school facilities to meet. It is possible students take practices and policies for granted, not realizing how they relate to the students' best interest.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Satisfaction with student services is not limited to student services. Satisfaction with instruction is also related. Focus group students found it difficult to separate the two. In fact, Benjamin and Hollings (1997) discuss Benjamin's ecological model of student satisfaction in which the student experience is subject to multiple influences, some linear and unidirectional and others nonlinear and bidirectional. This theory may explain why inconsistencies exist in student's report of satisfaction.

Evans (2003) suggested support services do influence students' development through Chickering's seven vectors; perhaps it is difficult to distinguish this from other factors. Knowledge of student development, or understanding the college student's needs, did not appear to be a significant factor in satisfaction. Students focused on relationships and increased communication. Faculty and staff focused on providing

services. Deans and directors focused on communication and improved service delivery in order to minimize complaints, thereby increasing satisfaction.

### **SATISFACTION RELATED TO SERVQUAL MEASURES**

When students are familiar with various departments within Student Services, they are satisfied, similar to the CCSSE survey in Chapter One. For the most part, students are more satisfied than staff perceive. Overall, assurance is high at Tomball College. Students believe employees to be courteous and knowledgeable. Staff should convene groups of students more often to find out their opinions and suggestions.

Students report higher satisfaction regarding reliability of student services than staff perceive. It is likely employees are aware of minor flaws in the system and perhaps frustrated by the inability to make improvements. Those students who are familiar with Tomball's services are satisfied overall. Kotler and Fox (1995) suggest students who complain and are responded to quickly become more loyal even if the solution is not favorable. Registration and Advising involve complicated processes involving class schedules, course programs, and transfer requirements. If a mistake is made it may be more difficult to perform a service recovery, resulting in student dissatisfaction. One barrier to "services are available at times promised" is when technology interruptions take place, although students are less frustrated than staff perceive. Staff aim to serve students well and hold high expectations from themselves and colleagues.

A majority of students are unfamiliar with Student Services, again evident when focusing on Tomball's responsiveness. When students are familiar with various areas of the college, they experience satisfaction most of the time in reference to when services will be performed and how promptly they are provided. Dissatisfaction exists in how busy staff members are to respond to student needs, more evident by focus group results than survey results.

Furthermore, employees demonstrate empathy by providing individualized while understanding students' needs. At least four areas offer extended hours on a regular



basis, and students are most satisfied with those areas when asked about convenience. Results are inconclusive regarding students' best interest as the survey results and the student focus group results vary widely.

Tomball ranks high in the area of Tangibles. In fact, where employees desire a new student facility to house and redesign Registration and Advising, students rate these areas equal to the Library and Extended Learning Center, both in the newest building on campus.

### **STUDENTS VERSUS CUSTOMERS**

Finally, the question still remains as to whether colleges should consider students "customers." DeShields, Kara and Kaynak (2005) admit

"...student retention may be linked to customer satisfaction...that without students, there would be no need for colleges, which means not only a drop in tuition revenues, but also that colleges would no longer have clients to receive the classes, counseling, and other services that they were established to provide."

Satisfaction is the perception of the individual being served. Whether that individual is called "student" or "customer" is irrelevant. Students or customers alike possess options. They have the ability to choose another institution. Gemme's (1997) and other business research found it costs more to attract new customers than it does to retain existing customers. Applying business and marketing theory to higher education, colleges should attempt to make student's experiences positive and memorable in an effort to retain them.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS TO TOMBALL COLLEGE**

#### **1. Mandatory Orientation for Students**

- a. Faculty and staff feel passionately about this topic. They feel students will be better informed and possess the ability to be more resourceful in their journey at Tomball College. Topics such as early advising and registration as well as financial aid deadlines could be discussed.

- b. Students desire more information at the high school level. They feel as though they have missed out on certain opportunities because it takes them at least a semester to learn information. Considering many students do not commit to Tomball College until the summer, perhaps an orientation, as suggested by Benjamin and Hollings (1997), for those who decide to attend is better.
- c. Student survey results mirror the Graduation Survey discussed in Chapter 1, in which a majority of students express No Opinion in several areas of Student Services. Students are unfamiliar with Financial Aid (44%), Counseling (43%), Career Services (62%), Disability Services (78%), the Extended Learning Center (56%), and Student Activities (46%). While it is not surprising students are unfamiliar with Disability Services, an orientation session may inform prospective students of the potential.
- d. McCully (1980) found commuter students to be less satisfied than other students. Twenty-six percent of Tomball students work more than 30 hours per week, making it difficult to know about or take advantage of student services. Orientation could introduce students to how Tomball's services can assist them in balancing work and school or introduce them to financial aid so they can reduce their work schedule.

## 2. Mandatory Orientation for Staff

- a. If employees are not aware of what is available, it is impossible for them to refer students for other assistance.

- b. New employees would have time to get to know each other, increasing the likelihood there would be more cohesiveness between instruction and student services.
- 3. Cross Training
  - a. Students' top complaint about prompt service is many jobs are associated with one employee. If an employee is sick, at a conference, or on vacation, the service is unavailable until he or she returns.
  - b. Staff complain about lack of cross training, arguing it would facilitate prompt service during peak times.
- 4. A Culture of Teamwork
  - a. Seymour (1992, 18) suggested "quality is teamwork," which forces people to survive on relationship building instead of power and control.
  - b. Students suggested each student be assigned to a team of professionals (administrative, faculty, and staff) - similar to a four-year state university, but a new idea for Tomball College.
- 5. Interpretative Assistance of Current Surveys
  - a. Deans and directors are aware of several surveys Tomball currently administers, but they need assistance determining what should be done as a result.
  - b. According to Manning (in Rhoads & Black, 1995) student affairs practitioners should play a crucial role in the way college communities are structured. They need to understand data in order to create a "transformed academic community."

## 6. Cross Divisional Activities

- a. Faculty and support/professional staff do not know each other, which inhibits their ability to understand the others' perspective. Faculty and staff were unable to share openly or "educate" others about specific topics.
- b. Information would be more consistent between departments and divisions, ensuring accuracy.
- c. The addition of a faculty advising model would encourage faculty to interact more with other staff. The two would complement each others' knowledge, filling in the gaps when necessary.

## 7. Customer Service Training

- a. Recommended for all employees
- b. Deans and directors believe it is needed, although faculty and staff do not suggest it. Deans and directors handle escalated problem resolution and feel some issues could be avoided with better customer service.
- c. Tomball College renewed a Noel-Levitz training program and piloted it with Student Services employees in Fall 2006. These employees will be responsible for training others in the future.

## 8. Student Friendly Schedule

- a. Deans and directors and Students agree students who desire a full-time schedule are not able to create one without difficulty. At least one staff member in the faculty/staff group felt the same. One faculty member was surprised to hear this.

- b. Students often must travel to other campuses within the district due to the limited amount of classes available.
- 9. Employee Involvement in Student Activities
  - a. Students repeatedly stated they would like to see all levels of employees more involved in everyday campus life, including student activities.
  - b. Students desire more personable relationships with employees, as opposed to strictly service-related relationships.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

1. This study should be replicated using more quantitative statistics when evaluating the electronic survey.
2. Future research should include specific emphasis on individual areas of student services rather than an overall view of satisfaction in all ten areas.
3. Future research may separate Group 1 (faculty and staff) and Group 2 (deans and directors) in the electronic survey to be identical to the focus groups.
4. Future research should include investigating satisfaction related to specific demographic groups: gender, age, ethnicity, enrollment status, and employment status.
5. Two separate studies should be conducted to assess satisfaction at the main campus and at the Willow Chase satellite location.
6. Future studies should include frequency of use, satisfaction, and importance related to each area of student services, similar to the CCSSE survey in Chapter One.

7. Additional studies should be conducted at campuses within the NHMCCD college district to determine satisfaction. Many students travel between campuses, and their satisfaction at one site influences how they feel about other sites.

## **Appendices**

## **Appendix A: Electronic Survey**

Tomball College appreciates the time you are taking to complete this questionnaire. We are interested in providing the best service to you. Your input will be analyzed and evaluated to determine any improvements we can make in the area of Student Services.

This survey is broken down by department:

- Registration
- Advising
- Financial Aid
- Counseling (Student Life Office)
- Career Services (Student Life Office)
- Disability Services (Student Life Office)
- Assessment Center
- Library
- Extended Learning Center
- Student Activities

You are asked to assess each department separately. If you do not use a service, or if you are unfamiliar with the area, mark “N/A.”

Please notice that “1” designates “Strongly Agree” and “4” designates “Strongly Disagree.”



SERVICE CHARACTERISTIC	STUDENT SERVICE	RATING				
How strongly do you agree that the service at TC has these characteristics?		Strongly Agree		N/A		Strongly Disagree
1. Employees instill confidence in students that the service will be provided correctly.	...Registration.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Advising.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Financial Aid.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Counseling.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Career Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Disability Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Assessment Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Library.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Extended Learning Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
2. Services are provided in an atmosphere that is safe and secure.	...Registration.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Advising.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Financial Aid.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Counseling.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Career Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Disability Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Assessment Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Library.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Extended Learning Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
3. Employees are consistently courteous with students.	...Registration.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Advising.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Financial Aid.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Counseling.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Career Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Disability Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Assessment Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Library.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Extended Learning Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
4. Employees have the knowledge to answer students' questions accurately.	...Registration.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Advising.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Financial Aid.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Counseling.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Career Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Disability Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Assessment Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Library.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Extended Learning Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Student Activities.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Registration.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Advising.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Financial Aid.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Counseling.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Career Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Disability Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Assessment Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Library.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Extended Learning Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Student Activities.....	1	2	N/A	3	4

SERVICE CHARACTERISTIC	STUDENT SERVICE	RATING					
How strongly do you agree that the service at TC has these characteristics?		Strongly Agree		N/A	Strongly Disagree		
5. Services are provided within the time-frames and deadlines promised.	...Registration.....	1	2	N/A	3	4	
	...Advising.....	1	2	N/A	3	4	
	...Financial Aid.....	1	2	N/A	3	4	
	...Counseling.....	1	2	N/A	3	4	
	...Career Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4	
	...Disability Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4	
	...Assessment Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4	
	...Library.....	1	2	N/A	3	4	
	...Extended Learning Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4	
6. Staff show a sincere interest in resolving problems if they occur.	...Student Activities.....	1	2	N/A	3	4	
	...Registration.....	1	2	N/A	3	4	
	...Advising.....	1	2	N/A	3	4	
	...Financial Aid.....	1	2	N/A	3	4	
	...Counseling.....	1	2	N/A	3	4	
	...Career Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4	
	...Disability Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4	
	...Assessment Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4	
	...Library.....	1	2	N/A	3	4	
7. Services are performed correctly the first time.	...Extended Learning Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4	
	...Student Activities.....	1	2	N/A	3	4	
	...Registration.....	1	2	N/A	3	4	
	...Advising.....	1	2	N/A	3	4	
	...Financial Aid.....	1	2	N/A	3	4	
	...Counseling.....	1	2	N/A	3	4	
	...Career Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4	
	...Disability Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4	
	...Assessment Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4	
8. Services are available at the times promised.	...Library.....	1	2	N/A	3	4	
	...Extended Learning Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4	
	...Student Activities.....	1	2	N/A	3	4	
	...Registration.....	1	2	N/A	3	4	
	...Advising.....	1	2	N/A	3	4	
	...Financial Aid.....	1	2	N/A	3	4	
	...Counseling.....	1	2	N/A	3	4	
	...Career Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4	
	...Disability Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4	

SERVICE CHARACTERISTIC	STUDENT SERVICE	RATING				
How strongly do you agree that the service at TC has these characteristics?		Strongly Agree		N/A		Strongly Disagree
9. Records are kept accurately.	...Registration.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Advising.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Financial Aid.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Counseling.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Career Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Disability Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Assessment Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Library.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Extended Learning Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
10. Students are given a precise idea of when they can expect services to be performed.	...Registration.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Advising.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Financial Aid.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Counseling.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Career Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Disability Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Assessment Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Library.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Extended Learning Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
11. Service is prompt.	...Registration.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Advising.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Financial Aid.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Counseling.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Career Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Disability Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Assessment Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Library.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Extended Learning Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
12. Staff express a willingness to help students.	...Registration.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Advising.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Financial Aid.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Counseling.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Career Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Disability Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Assessment Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Library.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Extended Learning Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Student Activities.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Registration.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Advising.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Financial Aid.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Counseling.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Career Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Disability Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Assessment Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Library.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Extended Learning Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Student Activities.....	1	2	N/A	3	4

SERVICE CHARACTERISTIC	STUDENT SERVICE	RATING			
How strongly do you agree that the service at TC has these characteristics?		Strongly Agree	N/A	Strongly Disagree	
13. Staff never act too busy to respond to students' requests.	...Registration.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Advising.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Financial Aid.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Counseling.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Career Services.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Disability Services.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Assessment Center.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Library.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Extended Learning Center.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
14. Equipment appears to be modern.	...Registration.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Advising.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Financial Aid.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Counseling.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Career Services.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Disability Services.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Assessment Center.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Library.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Extended Learning Center.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
15. Physical facilities are visually appealing.	...Registration.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Advising.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Financial Aid.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Counseling.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Career Services.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Disability Services.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Assessment Center.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Library.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Extended Learning Center.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
16. Employees have a neat appearance.	...Registration.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Advising.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Financial Aid.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Counseling.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Career Services.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Disability Services.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Assessment Center.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Library.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Extended Learning Center.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Student Activities.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Registration.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Advising.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Financial Aid.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Counseling.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Career Services.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Disability Services.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Assessment Center.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Library.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Extended Learning Center.....	1	2	N/A	3 4
	...Student Activities.....	1	2	N/A	3 4

SERVICE CHARACTERISTIC	STUDENT SERVICE	RATING				
How strongly do you agree that the service at TC has these characteristics?		Strongly Agree		N/A		Strongly Disagree
17. The materials that are associated with the service (mailings, forms, brochures) are attractive.	...Registration.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Advising.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Financial Aid.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Counseling.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Career Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Disability Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Assessment Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Library.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Extended Learning Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
18. Staff provide individual attention to student needs.	...Registration.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Advising.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Financial Aid.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Counseling.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Career Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Disability Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Assessment Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Library.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Extended Learning Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
19. Hours of operation are convenient.	...Registration.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Advising.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Financial Aid.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Counseling.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Career Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Disability Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Assessment Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Library.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Extended Learning Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
20. Employees give students personal attention.	...Registration.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Advising.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Financial Aid.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Counseling.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Career Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Disability Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Assessment Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Library.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Extended Learning Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Student Activities.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Registration.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Advising.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Financial Aid.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Counseling.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Career Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Disability Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Assessment Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Library.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Extended Learning Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Student Activities.....	1	2	N/A	3	4

SERVICE CHARACTERISTIC	STUDENT SERVICE	RATING				
How strongly do you agree that the service at TC has these characteristics?		Strongly Agree		N/A		Strongly Disagree
21. Offices and policies have the students' best interest at heart.	...Registration.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Advising.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Financial Aid.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Counseling.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Career Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Disability Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Assessment Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Library.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Extended Learning Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
22. Offices and policies demonstrate an understanding of the specific needs of college students.	...Registration.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Advising.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Financial Aid.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Counseling.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Career Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Disability Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Assessment Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Library.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Extended Learning Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
23. Policies assure that all students are treated equally and fairly.	...Registration.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Advising.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Financial Aid.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Counseling.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Career Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Disability Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Assessment Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Library.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Extended Learning Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Student Activities.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Registration.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Advising.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Financial Aid.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Counseling.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Career Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Disability Services.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Assessment Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Library.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Extended Learning Center.....	1	2	N/A	3	4
	...Student Activities.....	1	2	N/A	3	4

On a scale of 1 – 10, with “1” representing the **MOST** important and “10” representing the **LEAST** important, please rank the following Student Services. Use each number only ONE time.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Registration
- \_\_\_\_\_ Advising
- \_\_\_\_\_ Financial Aid
- \_\_\_\_\_ Counseling (Student Life Office)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Career Services (Student Life Office)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Disability Services (Student Life Office)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Assessment Center
- \_\_\_\_\_ Library
- \_\_\_\_\_ Extended Learning Center
- \_\_\_\_\_ Student Activities

Please tell us a little about yourself so that we can understand how individual students perceive Student Services.

Gender:        Male                Female

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

How many hours are you **currently enrolled** in?    3            6            9            12            15

How many hours have you completed? \_\_\_\_\_

How many hours a week do you work?        9 or less            10 – 20            20-30    30 or more

Do you work on campus?    Yes                No

Are you currently involved in clubs or student government?        Yes                No

Please share any positive interaction you experienced with a staff member....you can generalize so that your identity is not compromised.

Please share any negative interaction you experienced with a staff member... you can generalize so that your identity is not compromised.

Please indicate your ethnic background:

Black

Hispanic

White

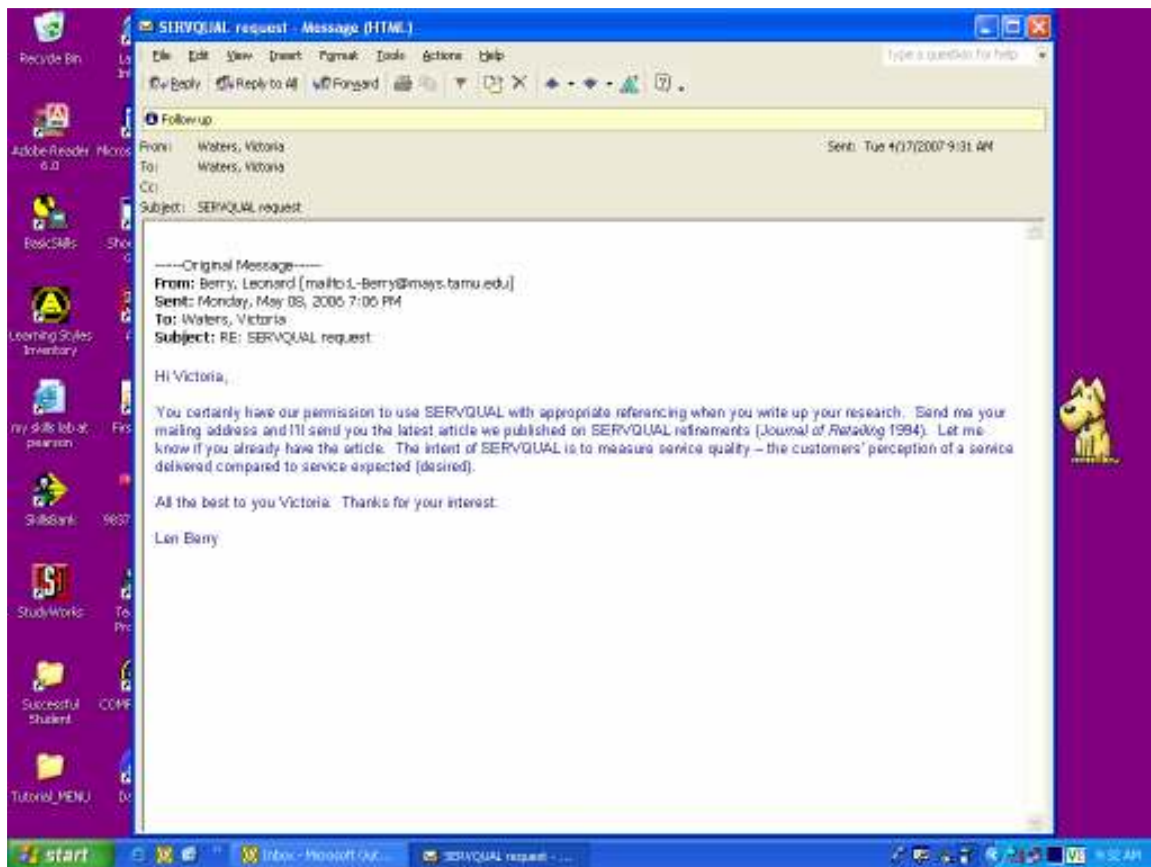
Asian

Other

Please feel free to make a suggestion on how Tomball College Student Services can improve.



## Appendix B: Approval to Use SERVQUAL instrument



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## **Vita**

Victoria Ann Waters was born in Los Angeles, California, on April 30, 1971, the daughter of Debra and Robert Waters. She grew up in Houston, Texas, while spending summers in California. Victoria attended the University of Texas at Austin, graduating with a Bachelor's of Science degree in Applied Learning and Development. She specialized in French and Reading and received a teacher's certificate. She even had an opportunity to follow her dreams to study in France. Victoria continued her education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, receiving a Master's degree in Curriculum and Development.

Victoria's professional experience includes three years of public school teaching at the elementary and junior high levels. She also worked for the City of Houston as a Senior Trainer, where she developed educational programs in public health and trained health educators to implement the programs in Houston schools. Her responsibilities included community relations presentations, trade shows, job fairs, and career days, all leading to her first position in the North Harris Montgomery Community College District as Assistant Director of School-to-Careers, linking students to the world of work and postsecondary education. Victoria currently works at Tomball College as the Extended Learning Center manager.

Permanent address: 19 South April Mist Circle, Conroe, Texas, 77385

This dissertation was typed by the author.